

The Muslim Sunrise

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"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)



& ISLAM American Society

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 178 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

Editor

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Maham Khan

Sabiha Khan

Staff Writers

Shazia Sohail

Saad Ahmad

Arif Humayun

Hasan Hakeem, Design/Layout
Fateh Shams, Circulation

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Mailing Address: The Muslim Sunrise, 2 S 510 Route 53, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137, Phone: (630) 790-4100, ext. 206, Fax: (630) 793-4100.

Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *Alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad *Sallallaho alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *Radhi-Allaho anho/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations have been abbreviated in the text for readability (as, sa & ra respectively), we encourage all Muslims to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he had the honor of founding the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands as the first and longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

Coming Soon:

www.muslimsunrise.com



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 81: Al-Takwir

[81:1] In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ١

[81:2] When the sun is folded up,

وَإِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ ٢

[81:3] And when the stars are obscured,

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ ٣

[81:4] And when the mountains are made to move,

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ ٤

[81:5] And when the she-camels, ten-month pregnant are abandoned,

وَإِذَا الْإِبْرَارُ عُطِّلَتْ ٥

[81:6] And when the wild beasts are gathered together,

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ ٦

[81:7] And when the rivers are drained away,

وَإِذَا الْإِنِّارُ سُجِّرَتْ ٧

[81:8] And when various people are brought together,

وَإِذَا الْفُؤُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ ٨

[81:9] And when the female-infant buried alive is questioned about -

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ ٩

[81:10] 'For what crime was she killed?'

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ١٠

[81:11] And when books are spread abroad,

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ١١

[81:12] And when the heaven is laid bare,

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ ١٢

[81:13] And when Hell-Fire is set ablaze,

وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُوقِرَتْ ١٣

[81:14] And when Paradise is brought nigh,

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُنْزِلَتْ ١٤

[81:15] Then every soul will know what it has produced.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ ١٥

[81:16] Nay! I call to witness those that recede while advancing,

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالْغُلَبِ ١٦

[81:17] Rush ahead and then hide.

الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ ١٧

[81:18] And I call to witness the night as it draws to a close,

وَالْيَلِ إِذَا عَاسَ ١٨

[81:19] And the dawn as it begins to breathe,

وَالضُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ١٩

[81:20] That this is, surely, the word revealed to a noble Messenger,

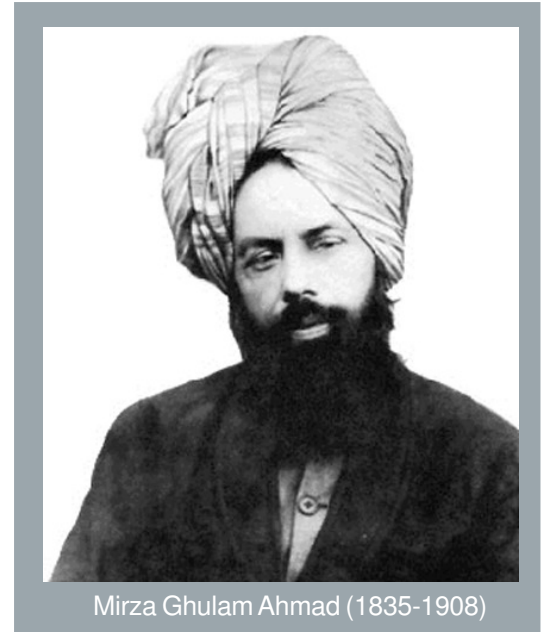
إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ٢٠

Opening Commentary

A Message of Peace

O' my Almighty God! My Beloved Guide! Show us the path which leads the righteous and the sincere to Thee and save us from treading the path which leads to carnal desires, malice, spite and worldly pursuits.

Having said that, I now draw your attention to the following. Notwithstanding the hundreds of differences between us, Muslims and Hindus alike share one thing in common, i.e. we all believe in God, the Creator and Master of the universe. Also we belong to the same denomination of God's species and are referred to as humans. Furthermore as inhabitants of the same country we are mutual neighbors. This requires that we behave like friends to each other with purity of heart and sincerity of intentions. We should dispose kindly to each other and be mutually helpful. In the differences pertaining religious and worldly matters we should also exercise such sympathy towards each other as limbs of the same body.



My countrymen! A religion, which does not inculcate universal compassion is no religion at all. Similarly a human being without the faculty of compassion is no human at all. Our God has never discriminated between one people and another. This is illustrated by the fact that all the potentials which were granted to the Aryans were also granted to the races inhabiting Arabia, Persia, Syria, China, Japan, Europe and America: The earth, created by God provides a common floor for all people alike and His sun and moon and many stars are a source of radiance to all alike; they also have many other benefits. Likewise all peoples benefit from the elements created by Him such as water, fire earth and other similar products such as grain, fruit and healing agents etc. These attributes of God teach us the lesson that we too should behave magnanimously and kindly towards our fellow human beings and should not be petty of heart and illiberal.

Friends! Take it as certain that if either of our two nations would not treat God's attributes with respect and will not shape her conduct in accordance with the conduct of God then that nation will be wiped out from the face of the earth. Not only will it destroy itself but it will also jeopardize the future of the generations to come. The righteous of all ages have testified that following God's ways works like an elixir for the people. Moreover the survival, both physical and spiritual, of human beings depends on the same eternal truth that man should follow the virtuous attributes of God, Who is the Fountainhead of all that is essential for survival.

Editorial



Religion has played an enormous role in helping solve the problems of humanity. With the passage of time, new issues and challenges appeared in societies. It is a sign of a living religion that it offers solutions to the latest challenges and provides continuous guidance for humanity.

In the modern world, we have issues varying from hunger and poverty to teenage pregnancies, abortion and terrorism. Various societies try to find solutions to all these problems through personal thoughts, logic and interaction with religious guiding principles. In the Western world the Ten Commandments are presented as the basis for solutions to social evils in addition to traditions of Christian philosophy as presented mainly by Saint Paul.

Religion helps humanity to avoid problems and evils in society before they occur. The primary reason why societies go astray is their disregard for Divine teachings. Nevertheless, when issues arise, it is still the responsibility of religion to offer solutions, even if those issues are the result of disobedience to Divine commandments.

Most religions teach not to commit adultery and fornication. Teenage pregnancies and abortion issues are the symptoms and results of disobedience to this commandment. However, we must look for a solution and how to deal with these outcomes from Divine wisdom. Human thought cannot provide us perfect solutions because human thought was the very cause of the problem in the first place.

Islam offers solutions to prob-

lems in the new era through the Holy Qur'an and traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, just as it did in the past ages. It contains perfect guidance which helps to avoid social evils and teaches people how to handle destructive results even after we disregard Divine guidance. Islam has enhanced the Ten Commandments so that they are now practical, applicable to all ages and satisfy human reason.

In this issue we have offered a few articles in reference to Islam's solutions to modern economic challenges as well as issues concerning morality. We have tried to cover the emotional issue of abortion from an Islamic perspective and what the religion offers as the basis for a sound family unit through the proper system of marriage. We also cover the principles of the Islamic economic system, which provides for the hungry and the homeless in a way modern systems do not.

In future issues, the Muslim Sunrise will provide more thought provoking material, in order to keep pointing out Divine solutions to social problems that exist on multi-religious and multinational levels. ♦

As-Salaam: The Source of Peace

Summary of a series of Friday sermons delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the world-wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on God's attribute of *As-Salaam* (The Source of Peace) from May 11 to June 1, 2007. He is affectionately addressed as *Hadhur* (Beloved).

Explaining the meaning of the word *Salaam*, Hadhur said that it is that Being Whose creation is safe from His oppression, the word is used for Allah because it denotes that He is free from any flaw or defect and is also free from the calamities that befall others, all creation will perish but death cannot overtake Him. He is also called Salaam because of His supreme bestowal of well-being and security. Citing verse 59 of Surah *Yasin*, Hadhur said this asserts that Allah confers peace on the believers in Paradise and within this is a message of absolute security for them. The verse tells us to convey peace to each other in order to gain Allah's pleasure in this world as well as the Hereafter. Allah's pleasure would grant us peace of mind in this world which we can utilise to exude peace in the environment.

Citing ahadith Hadhur said that Salaam is one of Allah's names that He has introduced in this world, therefore we must spread it about in the world. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) enjoined to say salaam to everyone that one knows and to those one does not know. He admonished that malice and jealousy was creeping among people like it had reprobated the ancients. He said malice was deleterious and one could not gain entry to Paradise unless one had perfect faith and one could not have perfect faith unless one lived with mutual love and affection and conveying salam to others was the essence of this.

-- May 11, 2007

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) explained that the connotation of word Islam in the Qura'nic verse, "Nay, whoever submits himself completely to Allah, while he is excellent in conduct, shall have his reward with his Lord. No fear shall come upon such, nether shall they grieve" (2:113) is that a Muslim is one who submits his entire being



in the way of Allah and is firm on good deeds, expends his entire literary prowess that he has and considers all of his being solely for the love and pleasure of Allah. Who, in practice does good purely for the sake of Allah as if he can see Allah reflected in his obedience.

The Holy Qur'an states, "And when they hear vain talk, they turn away from it and say, Unto us our works and unto you your works. Peace be on you. We seek not the ignorant" (28:56). Hadhur said once a believer submits himself completely to seek the pleasure of Allah that equates not responding to what is frivolous with frivolous. An Ahmadi is one who promotes peace and security; therefore, an Ahmadi avoids what is frivolous. Hadhur said some opine that this message of 'peace' signifies avoiding the unruly and the disorderly. Ahmadis do not take the law in their own hands and this is in line of this commandment that enjoins to avoid what is vain and frivolous. They avoid it because that is God's commandment and not because they cannot respond; they do not take the law in their hands and are not embroiled in the frivolous activities that others are. Others, who are ignorant in that despite being associated with the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) they have rejected the Imam of the age.

-- May 18, 2007

Citing part of verse 62 of Surah *Al Noor*, Hadhur said if families inculcate the habit of saying salaam to each other when entering houses it would go a long way towards

promoting mutual love and affection.

If the man of the house has a stern disposition his family would be 'safeguarded' from his strictness through the saying of the salaam. It happens that in such situations children turn rebellious and the wife is ever anxious. At times, this leads of separation late in life for the husband and wife, after spending years and years together. Hadhur said the practice of saying salaam would lessen such instances.

-- May 25, 2007

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said that 'neighbourhood' may stretch as far as a hundred miles. Hadhur said with Ahmadis inhabiting 185 countries of the world, if they steeped a hundred miles around their area with neighbourly goodwill, all the misconceptions of Islam being harsh would be erased.

Verse 37 of Surah *Al Nisa* goes on to widen the horizons of kindness and goodwill and includes one's colleagues, bosses, subordinates among those who should be the recipient of one's kindness. Hadhur said people we meet at our Community gatherings too are among those deserving our kindness and affection. In fact on reflection no one is exempt from receiving the merits of this commandment.

It is enjoined to show kindness and compassion to travellers or wayfarers as well. In short, not even the slightest of opportunity to dispense kindness and goodwill is to be missed.

Next the commandment speaks of kindness to those who are employed by one to serve. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said all living creatures that are in one's possession should be shown kindness and compassion.

In conclusion the verse declares that Allah does not like the arrogant and the boastful and that one who does not abide by these commandments cannot be a true servant of God, rather due to the arrogance one in fact follows the Satan. Arrogance is also a barrier in enabling one to discharge the rights of mankind.

-- June 1, 2007

Editor's Note: The sermons were translated by the alislam.org and the *Muslim Sunrise* staff.

Individual Freedom

By S. Sohail

“And they feed, for the love of Him, the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner” (76:9)

This verse of the Qur'an describes a laudable attribute of the righteous: for the sake of God, or Allah, they feed the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner. This simple act of pleasing God by feeding those disenfranchised by the economic, marital, and judicial systems points to an intertwining of the spiritual and material realms that is the hallmark of Islam: that righteousness resides in fulfilling the rights of God through worship and the rights of humankind through the practice of high morals.

A societal system that relies entirely on voluntary acts of altruism, however, would likely fail. In this light, Islam sets down in the Qur'an highly specific legal sanctions for regulating individual desire in favor of the public good, particularly in the realms of economics, marriage, and justice. But, the requirements spelled out in the Qur'an by no means treat exhaustively the societal obligations that are part and parcel of righteousness; rather, they go only so far as to

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The Public Good

The Qur'an's treatment of political authority follows similar lines. Just as Muslim congregational prayer demands the individual's embrace of the collective, so Islamic political thought describes authority in public matters as a trust between a nation's leaders and its constituents.

protect the society from the potential excesses of individual freedoms.

Whatever lies outside the pale of legal sanctions requires the voluntary effort of the individual to "feed" those in need. Muslims therefore believe that the Qur'an, with its unambiguous prescriptions for preserving social equity in the realms of economics, marriage, and justice, liberates humans to fulfill their obligations toward others in the form of kindness and mercy.

The righteous, like those who feed the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner out of pure love for God, unite their worship of God with their expenditure of the bounties with which God has blessed them. In attending simultaneously to the spiritual and material aspects of existence, they embody the essence of Islam. The Qur'an states that the righteous not only "believe in the unseen and observe Prayer," but "spend out of whatsoever We have bestowed on them" (2:4). Prayer, albeit a primary means of individual spiritual development, therefore, goes hand-in-hand with the ethical treatment of others:

And worship Allah and associate naught with Him and show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor that is a kinsman and the neighbor that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Surely Allah loves not the proud and the boastful (4:37).

As this verse demonstrates, although prayer is primarily an individual means of communicating with God, it is far from an ascetic practice. Rather, Allah enjoins Muslims to pray in congregation whenever possible, thereby giving Muslims an opportunity to exercise righteousness by "spending" out of what God has given them. In this case, "spending" could refer not simply to the expenditure of material goods, but also to the shared camaraderie of worshipping God together with "the companion by your side." For instance, the only way to celebrate Eid, the two non-consecutive days of obligatory practice of festivity, is by offering congregational prayers. Similarly, Hajj, the obligatory Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca,

entails communing with worshippers across national boundaries. On all these occasions, humans are expected to behave in accordance with rules of religious correctness that are instrumental in forging strong communities. Hence we notice rules designed to force a person out of seclusion, sometimes even against his or her personal inclination, to interact with society for the larger good.

The Qur'an's treatment of political authority follows similar lines. Just as Muslim congregational prayer demands the individual's embrace of the collective, so Islamic political thought describes authority in public matters as a trust between a nation's leaders and its constituents: "Verily, Allah commands you to entrust authority into the hands of those who are best fitted to discharge it, and that when you are called upon to judge between, or exercise authority over, the people, you must do so equitably and with justice" (4:59). The State must consult with the people, or their representatives, in carrying out its responsibilities (42:39). Muslim subjects, in turn, have been advised to cooperate with and obey those who have been entrusted with authority (4:60). People are enjoined to assist the authorities by supporting schemes that aim to promote general wellbeing and welfare. It is forbidden, for instance, to launch so-called non-cooperation movements (5:3) since such activities would threaten the internal affairs of a nation, which are aimed at providing people a peaceful and secure environment in which their lives, property, and honor are protected (2:206). In this light, the Qur'an stipulates that all men shall be entitled to food, clothing, and shelter: "It is provided for thee that thou wilt not hunger therein, nor wilt thou be naked, and that thou wilt not thirst therein, nor wilt thou be exposed to the sun" (20:119-120). The kindness that governments should show to their own citizens translates to their treatment of other nations. For instance, treaties and agreements must always be honored and inequitable agreements must not be forced upon the weak (47:5). In the same vein, aggressive actions against other nations are allowed in self-defense only, not as a means of intimidating

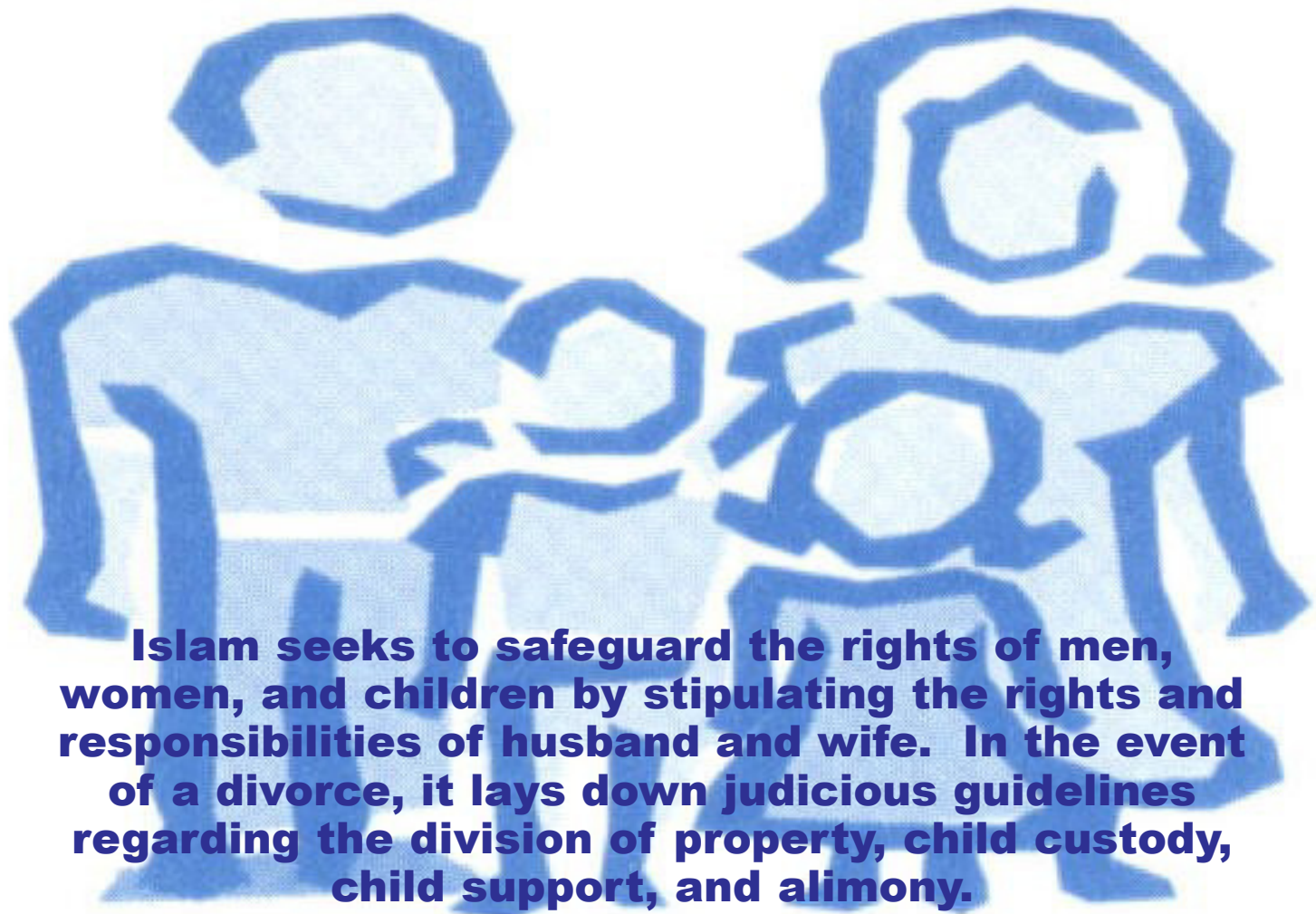
the weak (20:132)². The Qur'an, by protecting the rights of the powerless elements of society at the cost of individual liberty, provides the opportunity for individuals to exercise kindness and altruism in the social and political spheres.

Feeding the Poor, or the Regulation of Economic Practice

Islam recognizes and safeguards an individual's right to possess, enjoy, and transfer property; yet Islam also imposes the moral obligation that all sectors of society, even animals, have a right to share in that wealth: "In their wealth they acknowledge the right of those who asked and of those who could not" (51:20). Such moral exhortations foster the will not only to comply with the minimum legal requirements to disseminate resources, but also to bring about one's own spiritual and moral growth through generous and equitable spending practices. Such practices are based on the premise that it is God alone Who is Self-Sufficient and the source of all prosperity; it is people who are in need, and can achieve prosperity, not through miserliness and holding back, but through beneficent spending in the service of His creatures (47:39). The object of Islamic economic system therefore, is to bring about a wide distribution of wealth through moral exhortation and legal sanctions pertaining to taxation, law of inheritance, loans, and commercial practices, as detailed below:

Taxation (Zakat): Zakat is a levy imposed upon the rich which is spent on the welfare of the poorer sections of society. It is payable on both capital and income and is roughly two and one-half percent of the value of an asset.

Law of inheritance: In Islam, inheritance must be divided according to a specified proportion among prescribed heirs. Each heir can take only his or her share, and no heir can be deprived of the whole or part of his share. A maximum of one-third of one's wealth may be left by will to individuals or agencies other than heirs. The Islamic distribution of inheritance prefers that more people have



Islam seeks to safeguard the rights of men, women, and children by stipulating the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife. In the event of a divorce, it lays down judicious guidelines regarding the division of property, child custody, child support, and alimony.

some portion of the wealth rather than fewer having a large share. Additionally, it is suggested that, “If other relations, who are not included among the heirs, and orphans and the poor be present at the division of the inheritance, bestow something upon them from it and speak to them words of kindness” (4:9).

Loans: An outstanding feature of the Islamic economic system is the prohibition on collecting interest on loans, since it would amount to the lender taking advantage of the need and distress of the borrower. Islam attributes great moral excellence to advancing beneficent, i.e. interest-free, loans. If the debtor is unable to comply at the time of repayment, it is suggested that he or she be granted an extension till his or her circumstances improve or be forgiven for his or her debt: “if you remit it altogether as charity, that shall be better for you, if only you knew” (2:281).

Commercial Practices: All contracts must be written down, as “this is more likely to keep out doubts, and avoid disputes” (2:283).

Hoarding is opposed to beneficence and therefore prohibited. The Qur’an strictly enjoins giving full weight and measure and prohibits the exchange of worthless articles for good ones. Gambling is prohibited as well since it promotes hatred and causes more harm than good. Thus any transaction that falls short of the highest standard of honesty and integrity must be avoided⁴.

Feeding the Orphan, or the Regulation of Marital Practices

Islam seeks to safeguard the rights of men, women, and children by stipulating the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife. In the event of a divorce, it lays down judicious guidelines regarding the division of property, child custody, child support, and alimony. Contrary to common belief, permission to have multiple wives has been granted primarily to safeguard the rights of widows and orphans (4:3-4). In contemporary times developed nations have tried to achieve this goal by

instituting shelter homes and the foster care system. Islam seeks to avert this by granting permission to resort to polygamy with a view to taking under one’s protection those children who have lost their fathers; this becomes particularly crucial in the period immediately following a war. The Holy Qur’an suggests that the mothers of such orphans should marry men who survive the war, which would allow for the men to become directly related to, and more intimately connected with, these orphans and thus become more interested in their welfare than they otherwise would be.

Though the verse mentions polygamy in connection with the subject of orphans, other situations may benefit from the protection from social or moral evils that polygamy offers. For instance, if a man’s wife becomes a permanent invalid or suffers from a contagious disease, he has no choice but to contract another lawful marriage or, failing to control sexual urges, to engage in illicit sexual relations. A woman’s infertility could be another cause for plural matrimonial

connections, albeit the man could resort to divorce and remarriage, which could be prejudicial to the childless woman's interest.

Polygamy benefits women as well, especially in the aftermath of war, when the male population is severely depleted, and many women are left widows. Besides providing husbands for women of marriageable age, the institution of polygamy provides a means to restore the birth rate of a nation suffering from a scarcity of men, which is why the Nürenberg Parliament of 1650 had decreed that every man could marry up to 10 women since many men had perished in the Thirty Years' war. Islam limits this number to four.

Polygamous marriages, instead of being an outlet for the gratification of sexual passions, as is mistakenly understood, constitute a sacrifice demanded of men and women alike – a sacrifice in which personal and passing sentiments are subordinated to wider communal and national interests.³

Feeding the Prisoner, or the Regulation of Judicial Practices

The Qur'an has set up strict standards to administer justice, repeatedly emphasizing the independence and integrity of judges, non-discrimination, and the duty of witnesses to come forward to bear true and impartial witness: "O ye who believe, be strict in observing justice, and bear witness for the sake of Allah, even though it be against your own selves, or against parents or kindred" (4:136). But whereas in the Torah, God emphasized retribution, and in the Gospel He laid emphasis on forbearance and forgiveness, in the Qur'an, Muslims have been directed to seek the middle way: "Remember that the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and thereby brings about a reformation, his reward is with Allah. Surely, Allah loves not wrongdoers (42:41). Islam thus combines the best features of earlier teachings with the vital addition that forgiveness, rather than revenge, is likely to reform the conduct of the offender.

The severity of some forms of punishment in the Qur'an, particularly the "cutting of hands" as a punishment for theft, has been the source of some criticism. The Holy Qur'an mentions the "cutting of hands" as the punishment of theft, but the Arabic term '*qatai yud*' also can be interpreted broadly to mean 'to prevent someone from



God's revelation of the Qur'an was instrumental in instructing Muslims how to limit their liberties to address the needs of the collective.

doing something' and has been used in the Holy Qur'an in this manner elsewhere (12:32). Therefore, in most cases the practical application of this injunction entails taking preventive measures. However, in advanced cases the hand may also be severed. The reason for this is that Islam provides every person in Islamic society with the minimum requirements of livelihood, obviating any justification for theft. A hand that has been bestowed by Allah to earn a living, if used to damage the economic wheel, is no longer required. However, if the state is negligent in its duties, and there is widespread poverty and unemployment, then it relinquishes the right to implement severe punitive injunctions. Implementing the benefits of Islamic law needs to precede the Islamic injunctions of punishment, just as it did at the time of the Prophet. Only once a society of law-abiding, pious, and righteous people was established could laws governing punishment be revealed and enacted.

If severe punishments were not meted out to hardened criminals, the innocent would suffer. In a society where strict measures of prevention are not carried out, the suffering is not lessened. It is very rare that the hands of a thief are cut in an Islamic society; but much more often the innocent people in today's society are maimed and punished everyday at the hands of these thieves.¹

Islamic teachings emphasize that to ensure freedom for all, the freedom of each individual must be disciplined, the implementation of which has plagued intellectuals for centuries. Paraphrasing sociologist Karl Mannheim, some argue that discipline would emerge spontaneously if full freedom were to be granted to humans; others regard this theory as "anarchist" and maintain that if strict regulation is applied to certain areas of life, the possibility for real

freedom is created. Alluding to this confusion Mannheim declares, "Having no settled views on freedom and discipline, it is not surprising that we have no clear-cut criteria for the treatment of criminals [...] We hesitate whether to treat the law-breaker as a sinner or as a patient, and cannot decide whether he or society is at fault".⁵ Islam, on the other hand, alleviates this confusion by maintaining that God would instruct people in putting together the mosaic of their lives in a manner that reflected His creative genius. God's revelation of the Qur'an was instrumental in instructing Muslims how to limit their liberties to address the needs of the collective. The socio-ethical imperatives described in the Qur'an are in fact so beneficent in their effect that they serve as evidence for the perfection of the Qur'an itself; the assertion in the Qur'an that it is a "perfect book" resides in not only its lack of anything "partaking of doubt or harm," but its "guidance for the righteous" (2:3). ♦

Shazia Sohail holds an MBA from Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad, Pakistan and is a staff writer for the Muslim Sunrise. She resides in Hillsborough, CA.

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Economic Peace: An Islamic Perspective

By Dr. Inayat Mangla and Ismat Mangla

These days, if you turn on the news, pick up the *Wall Street Journal* or log onto CNN.com, what are you sure to find? Endless reports of a costly and prolonged war, corrupt shenanigans of giant corporations, and political scandals detailing the unscrupulous actions of those in power. Most recently, former World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz abused his power and was forced to resign from his role. The corporate environment is riddled with corrupt practices

such as false income reporting, fat consulting fees, the award of imbalanced stock options and irrationally-high salaries for CEOs. Trade imbalances, income inequalities, displacement of workers in the name of globalization and declining wages of workers abound in the global economy.

On the individual level, members of our cell-phone society are constantly trying to keep up with the Joneses. We are running the rat race to have the latest technologies

in our homes, the fastest cars and the best stock options. But where does it get us? We are working longer hours, spending less time with our families, and there is no satisfaction in sight.

It is clear from this state of society that our world is not at economic peace. So how do we achieve that peace? Islam provides us with the guidelines for achieving peace in every sphere of our existence. Allah summarizes this mortal life in these two verses of the Holy Qur'an:

"The likeness of the present life is only as water which We send down from the clouds, then there mingles with it the produce of the earth, of which men and cattle eat till, when the earth receives its ornamature and looks beautiful and its owners think that they have power over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day and We render it a field that is mown down, as if nothing had existed there the day before. Thus do we expound the Signs for a people who reflect" (10:25).

And in chapter 2, verse 266:

"And the case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to strengthen their souls is like the case of a garden on elevated ground. Heavy rain falls on it so that it brings forth its fruit twofold. And if heavy rain does not fall on it, then light rain suffices. And Allah sees what you do."

From these verses, we are to understand that life in this world is temporary and that those who sacrifice in the way of Allah will be rewarded. These basic guidelines can also be applied to economic peace. The Islamic concept of peace is twofold: First, to be at peace with God, and second, to be at peace with oneself and the rest of the world. The question, then, is: What is economic peace?

Economic Peace

To analyze this complicated issue, one can turn to the Holy Prophet's short saying: "The middle path of things is best." Students of Econ 101 might already know that in economics, this concept is referred to as equilibrium. Economics always seeks equilibrium, and equilibrium simply means balance. The Holy Prophet showed us the key to success in life is through the above-mentioned Hadith. This concept can also be applied to attaining economic peace on the individual and societal levels by examining the Holy Qur'an, Sunnah, Ahadith and the writings of the Promised Messiah and his successors.

On an individual level, members of society are constantly striving for the best material possessions money can buy. But does this money buy us satisfaction, and in turn, peace? Allah reminds us in the Holy Qur'an:

"Beautified for men is the love of desired



things – women and children, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and pastured horses and cattle and crops. That is the provision of this present life; but it is Allah with Whom is an excellent home" (3:15).

So Islam does not prohibit the use or seeking of good things of this world, but it condemns those who are wholly engrossed in them and make them the very object of their lives. The Holy Qur'an reminds us of the purpose of human creation:

"And I have not created the *Jinn* and men but that they may worship Me" (51:57). This worship occurs when humans serve God, receiving the impress of His many attributes.

To attain self-economic peace, and to meet the purpose of our creation, Allah gives us this prayer in the Holy Qur'an:

"Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and save us from the torment of the fire" (2:202). Then how do we achieve what is best in this world

and in the hereafter? In Chapter 89 of the Qur'an, Allah says:

"Nay, but you honor not the orphan, and you urge not one another to feed the poor, and you devour the heritage of the other people wholly, and you love wealth with exceeding love" (89:18-21)

Here, Allah outlines the four characteristics of the materialistic world: failure to perform worship, b) failure to feed the poor, c) indulgence in vain pursuits, d) denial of the Day of Judgment and accountability.

Therefore, economic peace and prosperity is only possible if we eliminate these practices from our lives. Self-economic peace will only commence once we follow Islamic guidelines for our daily spiritual and economic lives.

These guidelines begin with the basis of every Islamic practice – prayer. Prayer is required in Islam not just for spiritual affairs but for worldly ones, as well. It is reported that a man came to the Prophet and said "I work at the market and my partner engages himself in prayers in the mosque." The

Prophet remarked, "Probably the prosperity of your business is due to this fact."

Islam also requires that Muslims pay *Zakat*, a tax, on their wealth they hold for more than a year, as stated in the Holy Qur'an, "Whatever you pay in interest that it may increase the wealth of the people, it does not increase in the sight of Allah. But whatever you pay in *Zakat*, seeking the favor of Allah, it is these who will increase their wealth manifold" (30:40). In addition to *Zakat*, Ahmadi Muslims must pay *Chanda* (dues) at a prescribed rate and offer *Sadaqaat* (alms) to spend on good causes. Caring for neighbors, dealing fairly in business transactions and fulfilling one's contracts are all crucial to economic peace.

Finally, Islam encourages living within one's means and returning to the simplicity of life. Allah says, "Blind competition and mutual rivalry in the possession of worldly goods only creates a distance between the creation and the Creator, till one reaches the grave" (102:2-3). This is not easy to do in a society that encourages us to "just charge it." But Khalifatul Masih IV, Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra}, once said in a lecture in Canada in June 1996: "We must learn to live within our capacities, and we must learn to share the miseries of others with us. We must learn to share our happiness with others. Unless we are ready to do that, it is impossible to change the international relationship between nations. Try it in your own homes first."

Attainment of economic peace at a societal and international level is, as Khalifatul Masih IV said, an extension of individual peace. Currently, there are two economic systems in place: modern capitalism and socialism. Neither extreme will allow us to attain economic peace. But let's try to understand why they are doomed to fail.

Socialism suggests that everything belongs to the state. There is no concept of private enterprise or personal property rights. Ideally, the state would take care of everything. The snag, of course, is that the socialist system causes individuals to lose all sense of incentive and personal responsibility.

Capitalism, of course, is the framework we are forced to work with in this society. Under capitalism, wealth is amassed in the hands of a few, and it's based on an unjust system of



Those who devour interest stand like one whom Satan has smitten with insanity.

interest, which is fundamentally self-destructive. Here's how it works: Capital, or money, is loaned out at a fixed interest rate. This capital is used to create goods that *must* yield a profit that is greater than the prevailing interest rate. If this doesn't happen, the economy goes into a recession. The Holy Qur'an warns us:

Those who devour interest stand like one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is so because they keep saying: The business of buying and selling is also like lending money on interest: whereas Allah has made buying and selling lawful and has made the taking of interest unlawful. Remember, therefore, that he who desists because of the admonition that has come to him from the Lord, may retain what he has received in the past; and his affair is committed to Allah. But those who revert to the practice, they are the

inmates of the Fire, therein shall they abide. Allah will wipe our interest and foster charity. And Allah loves not confirmed disbelievers and arch-sinners (2:276-278).

So interest is emphatically forbidden in Islam. But my colleagues in the financial world ask why interest is forbidden. Here is a simple explanation: Allah tells us that it is unjust for one party to make a profit without sharing in the profit *and* the loss. If a bank lends an individual \$100 to start a business, expecting to be returned the original \$100 plus another \$10 in interest, the bank has not shared in the losses the businessman may incur. That businessman's business may fail, earning him only \$50. But he must still pay the bank the \$100 he borrowed plus the \$10 in interest. It is unjust for the bank to profit while the businessman suffers total losses. Islam cannot sanction this injustice.

Interest is so extensively and deeply embedded in modern economy that it has become the lynchpin of financial institutions and it seems difficult, if not impossible, to avoid it. This fulfills what the Holy Prophet had foretold: "A time will come when there will be none who has not devoured *riba* [interest]. For anyone not devouring *riba*, he will be touched with its dust" (Ibn Maja). Another version uses the word "fever" instead of "dust." The Holy Prophet had also foretold that a time would come when people would use different names for *riba*, as being practiced in some of the Islamic countries today.

The focus of this article is not to describe what Islamic banking and finance is, but to provide a basic spirit underlying the Islamic business philosophy. The nature of rulings on business affairs is quite different from the nature of those on worship, the methods and forms of which were given by the Prophet afresh under the guidance of Allah. The Prophet of Islam taught men the best rules of conduct, informed them of the limits set by Allah and established a society based upon justice and fair dealing.

There are some examples from the real world which illustrate why this system of interest and capitalism is bound to fail. In the

18th century, Spain relied on short-term funding to finance its debt and virtually bankrupted itself. The United States' national debt is currently at \$8.8 trillion, which is roughly 65% of its gross national product. Today, the world's two richest men, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, together couldn't even pay two months of interest on their country's debt.

But it gets worse. Three million people die of AIDS every year in Africa. The implicit cost of the Iraq war is estimated at \$1 trillion, and thousands of Iraqis and Americans continue to die, with no end in sight. These numbers are horrifying. But what is more horrifying is that the Western world spends more than \$1,350 billion a year on defense expenditures, and even less than \$100 billion on international loans and assistance to less privileged countries. What's even worse is that huge portions of the world's population has no access to basic health care, education and rural development, because 30% to 40% percent of their countries' export earnings go to servicing the staggering foreign debt. Still, rich nations have slashed funding to these countries for the past decades.

Corporations continue with corrupt business practices. Furthermore, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Consider this: In 1980, the average CEO's salary was 40 times that of the average North American factory worker. In 2004, the CEO was paid 431 times as much as the factory worker! Warren Buffet, the CEO of Berkshire, says, "Shareholders have suffered billions in losses while CEOs have walked away with extraordinary wealth."

A look at history illustrates why the capitalist system is a very dangerous one. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, every aspect of economic life collapsed. The unemployment rate exceeded 25%. Deflation was at 50%. The US gross national product fell by 30%. More than 10,000 banks in North America collapsed. World War II created massive debt. In the 1970s, the inflation rate was at 15%, and oil prices jumped from \$2 to \$40 a barrel. In 1981, the recession caused a 21% prime interest rate. On Oct. 18, 1987, Black Monday, the stock market crashed causing losses of \$500 billion in one day. Trade wars between North America, Europe and Asia have been rampant. Finally, the history of the stock market is relevant: In 1982, the Dow Jones average stood at 750. In 2007, it has reached 13,300. The total value of the US stock market today is approximately \$23 trillion, which is almost two times the size of the United States GNP. These pendulum swings are the results of artificial maneuverings, false expectations and irrational exuberance in stock prices. Today, oil

prices are at \$60 a barrel and continue to climb.

Adam Smith, the founder of modern capitalism, gave us 230 years ago the concepts of survival of the fittest, greed, absolute sovereignty, absolute individual property rights and absolute freedom. These are the hallmarks of capitalist society. Yet these very hallmarks are the cause of the economic problems which plague our world.

So what is the solution? How do we attain global economic peace? The Holy Qur'an gives us the answer. It tells us that unless you call mankind to Allah, no problems which human beings are facing can ever be resolved.

This narrative paints a grim picture of the world's economic landscape. But the solutions are simpler than you may think. If we look back at the 10 steps to achieving individual economic peace and apply them on a larger scale, we have a model for achieving global economic peace. The basic approach to individual economic peace was to achieve contentment and spend in the way of Allah. The same rule applies at the societal level. Global economic peace can only be achieved by *Adl* (justice) and *Insaf* (fairness). Wealth must be distributed between the haves and the have-nots. It is the responsibility of those nations who *have* to share with those who have not. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "Allah has favored some of you above others in worldly wealth. But those more favored will not restore any parts of their worldly gifts to those under their control, so that they may be equal partners in them. Will they deny the favor of Allah" (16:72).

Global economic peace can only be achieved by the fair distribution of income and wealth between workers, shareholders and the management. We universally claim that God is just and that we should be compassionate. Our corporate culture should practice that and stop destroying the lives of thousands of people in each episode of mergers and acquisitions leading to greater unemployment in the name of globalization and sometimes bankruptcy.

We must partake in fair trade and commerce if we are to achieve peace. We cannot keep nations in economic slavery in the 21st century – we must have fair international trade practices. The capitalist society talks of equal opportunities, level playing fields and free economy. But where are those equal opportunities – they do not exist under the capitalist system. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. All of the problems plaguing our society are the *direct* result of practices

which Islam has expressly forbidden, particularly the use of interest.

Islam's solution is to develop an economy where lending is based on profit/loss sharing, so the buying power of society remains within realistic limits. In essence, profit should be distributed among the partners in business in proportions settled by them. The share of every partner in profit must be settled as a proportion or percentage.

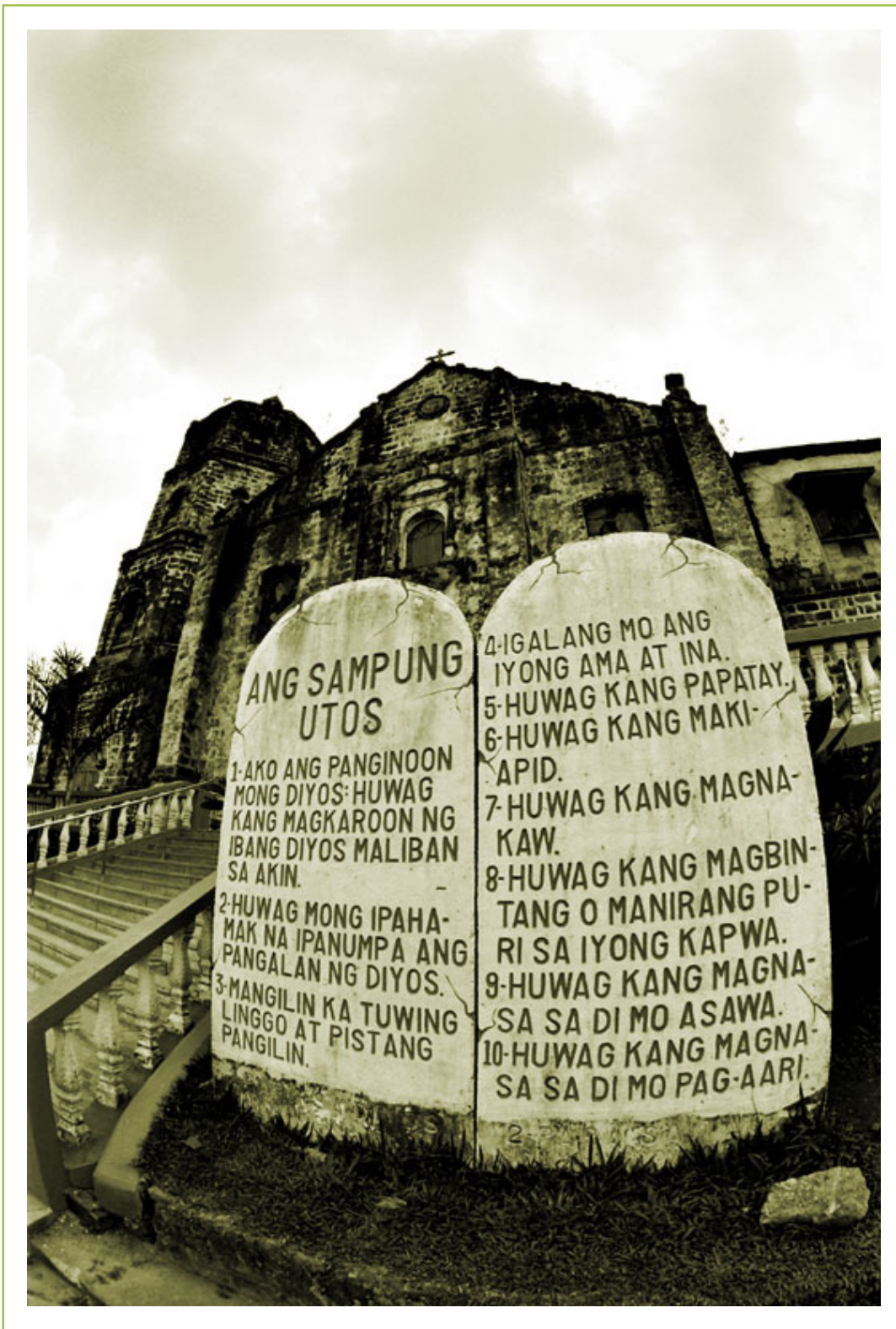
Loss refers to that part of the capital that is destroyed. Loss should therefore be distributed in proportion to the invested capital and should be borne by the owners of that capital. This implies that no supplier of capital can escape his liability for the loss on his proportion of the total capital and that any party who has not invested any capital will not be liable to any loss of capital.

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra} tells us: "Islam attempts to create an attitude whereby the governments and the wealthy are constantly reminded that it is in their own ultimate interest to establish an equitable economic system. They are also constantly exhorted to be on the lookout for the rights of others."

Islam's method is to develop a model which balances the capitalist and socialist ways of doing things. Yes, there is research to be done. God has provided us the basic guidelines – it is now up to us to extract the solution. The Holy Qur'an is full of knowledge and wisdom that humanity is still beginning to understand. For example, the Qur'an tells us of a creature that can only survive in fire. For a long time, this baffled our minds. It wasn't until the 20th century that science discovered a type of bacteria that could only survive in extremely high temperatures. This discovery corroborated the truth in the Holy Qur'an. Similarly, we must carry on the work to develop the ideal system whose foundations are laid out in the Holy Qur'an. Only then, by developing this system and returning humanity to God, can we achieve global economic peace. ♦

Dr. Inayat U. Mangla is a Professor of Finance at Western Michigan University. His daughter, Ismat Sarah Mangla, has a Master of Arts in Journalism from Columbia University and writes for Money magazine. She resides in New York, NY.

Editor's Note: This article is an adaptation of a speech delivered at the Annual Ahmadiyya Muslim Convention in Toronto, Canada in 2002 by Dr. Inayat Mangla.



The photo of the Decalogue was taken at Magdalena, Laguna, Philippines. This displays the replica of the 10 commandments translated in tagalog, local dialect. One of the oldest church in the country, the church was built by the spaniards. 90% of the country's population are Christians which was influenced by the Spaniards, which ruled the Philippines for a century.

The Decalogue Enhanced

Part I

By Imam Mubasher Ahmad

It was approximately three thousand and four hundred years ago, when Moses^{as} and his followers, having escaped from Egypt, arrived at Mount Sinai, and received the Ten Commandments. According to Deuteronomy 5:22, the entire assembly of Israel heard the great voice of God, “out of the midst of the fire, of cloud, and of the thick darkness.” The Ten Commandments received directly from God could be divided into two sections. The first four commandments related to God Himself, and the remaining six concerned man’s relations to his neighbor. Perhaps this is why the finger of God inscribed the Decalogue on two separate stone tablets (Exodus 31:18).

With the passage of time, many supportive rules and rituals were developed around the Ten Commandments and a rigorous legal regulatory system was formed. Jesus^{as} retained the Mosaic dispensation, but he did not preach its literal implementation. He emphasized the essence of the Law; that is, the element of unconditional love for God and for one’s neighbor. He summed up the Mosaic Law into two great commandments. When asked by one of the Pharisees, a lawyer, which was the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus^{as} replied, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Unfortunately, the authors of the New Testament introduced the Trinity into

Christianity and thus compromised the first commandment concerning the Unity of God. Jesus^{as} himself was raised to the status of God, a joint partaker of the same Divine nature with God Himself.

Conversely, the Holy Qur’an expands both categories of commandments. For man’s spiritual enhancement, it provides guidance in detail about the Rights of God (*Haqooq-ul-Allah*) and firmly establishes the Unity of God, providing convincing arguments against the concept of Trinity and all forms of polytheism; while, for man’s moral interaction with others, it establishes a comprehensive and realistic system of regulations that deals with the Rights of God’s servants (*Haqooq-ul-abaad*). The Holy Qur’an not only reinforces the Ten Commandments given to Moses^{as} and the Children of Israel, it improves upon them for better implementation on a universal scale, and corrects the mistaken attitude of Christianity on both fronts.

First Commandment

To Moses^{as} God proclaimed the first commandment in the following words:

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before Me,” (Exodus 20:1-3, Deuteronomy 5:6-7).

The Holy Qur'an declares: "And your God is One God; there is no God but Him, the Gracious, the Merciful," (2:164); "And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth and to Him is obedience due for ever and ever. Will you then take any other than Allah as your protector?" (16:53) and, "I there had been other gods besides Allah, then surely both (the heavens and the earth) would have gone to ruin. Glorified then be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, far above what they attribute to Him," (21:23). The Holy Qur'an also deals with the concept of Jesus^{as} being divine. It proclaims: "Say: He is Allah, the One! Allah is Independent and Besought of all. He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him," (112:2-5); "Holy is He and exalted far above what they attribute to Him – the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He has no consort, and when He created everything and has knowledge of all things?" (6:101-102). And yet again it says, "Allah has not taken unto Himself any son, nor is there any other god along with Him; in that case each god would, surely have sought domination over others. Glorified be Allah far above that which they allege; He is the Knower alike of the unseen and the seen. Exalted is He above all that which they associate with Him" (23:92, 93), and "So believe in Allah and His messenger and say not 'three.' Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one God" (4:172).

The Holy Qur'an makes it clear that the Unity of God (*Tauhid*) has been a universal teaching proclaimed and practiced by all the Prophets of God throughout the ages. Adam^{as}, Noah^{as}, Abraham^{as}, Lot^{as}, Ishmael^{as}, Isaac^{as}, Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as} – all preached that God is One in His person, One in His attributes and One in His works. The Qur'an rejects plurality of Godhead in any form. All the Prophets who followed Moses^{as} adhered to the first commandment and worshipped only One God. The Holy Qur'an declares it to be the greatest of all the sins to associate

any partner with Allah. Allah will not forgive a person who dies in a state of *Shirk*, that is, who worships other god(s) beside Allah (4:117). The Holy Qur'an declares: "Surely, ascribing a partner to Him is a grievous iniquity," (31:14). "Shun, therefore, the abomination of idols, and shun all words of falsehood, devoting yourselves wholly to Allah, not associating anything with Him. And whoso associates anything with Allah, his case is, as if he fell from a height, and the birds snatched him up, or the wind blew him away to a far-off place," (22:31, 32). God created man as the best of all creations – as His vicegerent (a caliph) on earth. To worship any entity other than One God throws man into abysmal spiritual degeneration: "Shall I seek for you a god other than Allah, while He has made you excel all created things?" (7:141). "Is Allah better or that which they associate with Him? Who created the heavens and the earth, and who sent down water for you from the clouds wherewith We cause to grow beautiful orchards? You could not cause the trees to grow. Is there a god with Allah? Nay, they are a people who deviate from the right path. Or, who made the earth a place of resort, and placed rivers in its midst, and placed upon it firm mountains, and put a barrier between the two waters? Then, is there a god with Allah? Nay, most of them know not. Or, who answers the cry of the distressed person when he calls upon Him, and removes the affliction, and makes you inheritors of the earth? Then, is there a god with Allah? Little is it that you reflect" (27:60-63).

Second Commandment

The Second Commandment also emphasizes the Unity of God:

“Thou shalt not make any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6, Deuteronomy 5:8-10).

**The Holy Qur'an
Bani Israel**

[27:11] To all We render aid -- to those as well as to those -- a gift from My Lord. And the gift of My Lord is not restricted.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا نَكُنُّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝ وَنَا
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا نَكُنُّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۝

[27:12] Behold, how We have exalted some of them over others in the present life; and surely the Hereafter shall be greater in degrees of rank and greater in excellence.

الْقُرْآنَ لَكُمْ يَسْمَعُ عَلَى نَسِيءٍ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا
مُتَّبِعِيهِ ۚ إِنَّ إِلَهَ لَكُمْ لَوَحْدٌ ۚ

[27:23] Do not set up another god with Allah; lest then you down condemned and forsaken.

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ كَفَرْنَا بِهِ عَدُوٌّ مُسْتَقَرٌّ
وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا أَهْلَ عِلْمٍ ۚ

[27:24] The Lord has commanded that ye worship none but Him, and that ye show kindness to parents. If one as both of them attain old age with thee, never say to them as much as aught nor reproach them, but always address them with kindly speech.

وَالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِذَا قَالَا هَذَا إِلَهُآؤُنَا وَمِمَّا يُغَاثِبُونَ
أَبْنَاءَهُمْ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ۚ إِنَّ إِلَهَ لَكُمْ لَوَحْدٌ ۚ

[27:25] And bane them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, 'My Lord, have mercy on Bani-isra-ilm; they ascribed me when I was a little child.'

وَالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِذَا قَالَا هَذَا إِلَهُآؤُنَا وَمِمَّا يُغَاثِبُونَ
أَبْنَاءَهُمْ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ۚ إِنَّ إِلَهَ لَكُمْ لَوَحْدٌ ۚ

[27:26] 'Yasee Lord knows best what is in your minds. If you are righteous, then surely, He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ

[27:27] And give to the kinsman his due, and to the poor and the wayfarer, and squander not thy wealth extravagantly.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ

[27:28] Verily, the squandors are brothers of sinners and Satan is ingrateful to his Lord.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ

[27:29] And if thou has to turn away from them while seeking the Lord's mercy for which thou hasten, even then speak to them a kind word.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ

[27:30] And keep out thy hand chained to thy neck, out of mindlessness nor stretch it forth to its utmost limit out of extravagance, lest thou art down blasted and exhausted.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا لَمَّا تَبَايَعْتُمْ الْبَيْعَ أَنَّكُمْ لَكُمُ الْمَوَدَّةَ
بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ

The Jews upheld this commandment, but the early Christians took a departing turn and proclaimed that God Himself broke this commandment by appearing in the shape of a man. The Apostle Paul wrote: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,” (Philippians 2:5-7). Throughout the centuries, Christians have made graven images of Jesus^{as} believing him as Divine and they have bowed down to his image without any restraint.

The Holy Qur'an makes it clear that God is invisible to the eyes and that He is Incomprehensible: "Such is Allah, your Lord. There is no god but Him, the Creator of all things; so worship Him. And He is Guardian over every thing. Eyes cannot reach Him but He reaches the eyes. And He is the Incomprehensible, the All-Aware," (6:46-47). Not only that, God is in full knowledge of everything Unseen: "And with Him are the

keys of the Unseen; none knows them but He,” (6:60). The Qur’an negates the thought than an image or an idol is only an outward symbol of the Divine and that one needs it to remain focused on God. A true believer can worship the Unseen God with awe in his/her heart. “Verily, those who fear their Lord in the Unseen, for them is forgiveness and a great reward. And whether you conceal what you say or say it openly, He knows well all that which is in your breasts” (67: 13, 14). Not to make any image of God was fundamental to Abraham’s^{as} teachings to his people: “And before this We gave Abraham his guidance and We knew him well. When he said to his father and his people, ‘What are these images to which you are so devoted?’ They replied, ‘We found our fathers worshipping them.’ He said, ‘Then, you as well as your fathers have indeed been in manifest error’” (21: 52-55). The handmade images of God were broken by Abraham^{as}, and he reasoned with his people to prove the barrenness of their religious tradition, asking: “Do you then worship, instead of Allah that which cannot profit you at all, nor harm you?” (21:67).

The Third Commandment

The Third Commandment prohibits taking the name of God in vain.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7, Deuteronomy 5:11).

The Holy Qur’an makes a special reference to this commandment explaining that truly vain is all that which prohibits one from righteousness. It is a great violation of God’s sacred name when used for acts of injustice and transgression. “And make not Allah a target of your oaths that you may thereby abstain from doing good and acting righteously and making peace between men. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing,” (2:225). Specifically if one man swears foolishly and unjustly in the name of God, such an oath is nullified and he is made accountable for his ill-intention. “Allah will not call you to account for such of your oaths as are vain, but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing,” (2:226). And again, “Allah will not take you to task for such of your oaths are vain, but

He will take you to task for breaking the oaths which you take in earnest” (5:90). In the Holy Qur’an, God is called the Truth, and all truth emanates from Him. Vanity is equated with falsehood. Vanity and truth, therefore, cannot go together: “And confound not truth with falsehood nor hide the truth knowingly,” (2:43), as “... it is Allah Who is the Truth, and that which they call on beside Him is falsehood and because Allah is the High, the Great” (22:63).

The Fourth Commandment

The Fourth Commandment relates to the observance of the Sabbath day of the Jews:

“Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well thou.” (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

The Sabbath was declared the day for rest, because, according to the Bible, after completing His creation in six days ‘God rested on the seventh day’ (Gen 2:2), “for in six days the Lord made heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20: 1-17).

But as a matter of fact, it was an early Babylonian tradition to curtail certain activities on that day and to consider it as holy based on grounds of astronomy. The Mosaic Law enforced its sanctity by cessation from labor, traveling and trading, and dedicating it unconditionally to God. The penalty of defiling the Sabbath was death (Exodus 31:15; 25:2).

The Mosaic Law had fixed Saturday as the Sabbath — the chief time of public worship, but early Christianity shifted it to Sunday, the first day of the week in the Roman calendar, dedicated to the worship of the sun. Shamash was the great sun god of the ancient Middle East. Sunday was also to commemorate the “Lord’s Day” when Christ was “resurrected” like the rising of the sun — a day to “Rejoice.”

The Holy Qur’an refers to the violation of the Sabbath day, and strongly rebukes

the tendency among the Jews and the Christians to break a covenant made with God by aping other people in worldly pursuits. “And We raised high above them the Mount while making a covenant with them, and We said to them, ‘Enter the gate submissively’ and We said to them, ‘Transgress not in the matter of the Sabbath. And We took from them a firm oath,” (4:155). Yet again it says, “And ask them concerning the people of the town which was on the seashore when they profaned the Sabbath,” (7:164); “And surely you have known the end of those among you, who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath. So We said to them, ‘Be ye apes, despised,’” (2:66); “We cursed the people of the Sabbath,” (4:48) and, “The punishment for profaning the Sabbath was imposed only on those who had differed about it and your Lord will surely judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning wherein they differed” (16: 125).

The Holy Qur’an teaches us that Allah does not need to take rest: “Allah — there is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor He falls asleep,” (2:256). And, “He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden, and He knows all things. He is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, then He settled Himself on the Throne. He knows what enters the earth and what comes out of it, and what comes down from heaven and what goes up into it. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah sees all that you do,” (57: 4, 5). Therefore, there is no Sabbath day in Islam in the sense of God resting on the seventh day. On every Friday, however, there is a special congregational prayer in the early afternoon. The Arabic name for the day is ‘Jum’a’, which means the day of gathering. “O ye who believe, when the call is made for Prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off all business. That is best for you, if you only knew. And when the prayer is over then disperse in the land and seek of Allah’s grace, and remember much that you may prosper,” (62: 10, 11). Thus, before and after the Jum’a prayer, the Muslims are allowed to work and earn their livelihood, keeping God in their hearts all the time. ♦

Part II will be presented in the Fall 2007 issue.

ROE Versus WADE

Islamic Teachings on Abortion

By Fareeha Haroon

A landmark decision made by the US Supreme Court, *Roe v. Wade* has impacted society since its passage in 1973 in significant ways. It has served to divide Americans into two factions; namely, “Pro Choice” and “Pro Life”. The ruling was heralded as a harbinger of a better society. For the first time in US history abortions were declared legal during all nine months of pregnancy and the decision to have an abortion was left to the discretion of the pregnant woman.

The passing of *Roe v. Wade* led to a significant increase in the rate of abortions. In 1973, an estimated 744,600 abortions were performed in the U.S. Abortions peaked in 1990 when the number rose to 1,608,600. While there was a slight decrease in the trend thereafter, the number of abortions remained much higher than pre-1973 figures. In 2004 more than 1,293,000 abortions were performed. It is estimated that forty-six million abortions are performed worldwide every year. So, almost 126,000 fetuses meet their untimely end, every single day.^[1]

The Court justified allowing abortions in all circumstances using the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the constitution. The Court contended that according to the constitution every citizen had the right to privacy and abortion is a private matter. According to the due process clause, government should respect all rights of a person and cannot deprive anyone of any right without due process. This decision deemed all antiabortion laws in the U.S. unconstitutional.

The Court declared that the right to an abortion was a personal right of a woman and the government was to respect all personal rights of an individual:

“We, therefore, conclude that the right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision, but that this right is not unqualified and must be considered against important state interests in regulation.”^[2]

The Court denied the right of a fetus to be considered as a person on the grounds that the definition of a human being given in the constitution does not include an unborn child. The Court also declared that it is beyond the scope of government to decide when life begins in a fetus.

“The decision established a system of trimesters that attempted to balance the state’s legitimate interests against the abortion right. The Court ruled that the state cannot restrict a woman’s right to an abortion during the first



trimester, the state can regulate the abortion procedure during the second trimester ‘in ways that are reasonably related to maternal health’, and the state can choose to restrict or proscribe abortion as it sees fit during the third trimester when the fetus is viable (‘except where it is necessary, in appropriate medical judgment, for the preservation of the life or health of the mother’).’^[3]

Pro-Choice Arguments

While the case was being argued in court, pro-choice advocates gave many arguments in favor of their point of view. The appellants argued that by legalizing abortions, ‘back-alley abortions’ would decrease significantly. A large number of women would escape complications and even death at the hands of illegal clinics. By legalizing abortions, a woman who became pregnant as a result of a rape would be spared the agony of giving birth to an unwanted child. Society would be further protected from people who would otherwise become a burden or nuisance. They even claimed that by legalizing abortions the crime rate would be reduced considerably because an unwanted, and thus ignored, child would become a threat to society later in his/her life. Furthermore, if a fetus was deemed abnormal (i.e., to be born with birth defects) and would be unable to live on his/her own, then such a fetus should be aborted to save that child and his family the agony of leading a miserable life.

child; the vast majority of abortions, a staggering 95%, are performed as a means of birth control.^[4]

Proponents of abortion contended it was the personal right of a woman to decide for herself whether or not to keep the child. Government should have nothing to do with this matter. By interfering with this issue, government was violating the rights of women. However, while protecting women’s constitutional rights to “...liberty and pursuit of happiness”, advocates of abortion negated the most basic right of the fetus: that of “life”. Secondly, such a stance undermined the responsibility of the government to protect and ensure the continuation of life – one of its most fundamental roles.



The pro-choice movement argues that women should be in total control of their pregnancies simply because their body belongs to them and they should always decide for themselves. Islam does not agree with this absolute point of view. It does respect the privacy of a person but not at the cost of a life. It is Allah who creates life in the womb of a mother. As women, the decision is not laid in our hands alone to decide the fate of a fetus. It is more like a trust given bestowed upon women to protect and nurture.

to resolve the issue on different levels, including psychological, moral, and philosophical. Those in favor of abortions said that a fetus was not a human being and did not possess human qualities like consciousness, activity, communication, and self-awareness. The pro-life faction argued that while a fetus may not have all these qualities, it had the potential to develop them, provided it was allowed to grow. By legalizing abortions, the potentiality of life is endangered. If the stance taken by pro-choice advocates is taken as true, then comatose patients who also lose all these qualities, are just as prone to be killed as is a fetus. If this argument is further extended, then infanticide can also be allowed, as infants, up to a

certain age, do not possess all of the human qualities mentioned above. Furthermore, this argument, if accepted, would deprive the fetus of a promising and bright future.

Islamic Teachings on Abortion

An examination of history shows that all religions had initially declared abortions illegal (though later some factions within religions declared it legal). Islam declares abortions illegal altogether. Different schools of thought within Islam differ in some respect but all of them agree that killing a fetus is akin to murder. The only situation where it is permitted is if the mother’s life is in danger. According to Islam, life begins at conception and abortion is akin to murder, no matter what the stage of the fetus’

development. For Islam life is very sacred and cannot be discarded for the sake of personal convenience. The Holy Qur’an relates:

“And that you kill not the life which Allah has made sacred, save by right” (6:152).^[5]

A fetus then, though not yet viable, is

Numbers Don’t Lie

Statistics on the reasons behind abortions are telling. Only one percent (1%) of all abortions are due to rape and incest; only four percent (4%) of abortions are performed because of potential health problems in the mother or

The Fetus’ Right to Live

In addition to privacy, another hotly debated issue was whether or not a fetus had the *right* to live. Should it be considered human even in its most primitive form? Both sides presented different theories to support their stance on this question. Each side tried

By aborting a disabled child, one mistrusts God Almighty and believes that Allah cannot provide for every need. Allah the Gracious states in the Holy Qur'an many times that He is the Sole Provider for all the needs of His people and no one can truly comprehend the goodness hidden behind His actions.

alive. This conclusion can be confirmed by another verse of the Holy Qur'an:

“And kill not the soul which Allah has forbidden save for just cause.” (17:34) ^[6]

Commenting on this verse, Khalifatul Masih II writes: “This verse declares it unlawful to kill a soul, the killing of which has been forbidden by God. The word *nafs* (soul) means anything which breathes and therefore includes all living things.” ^[7]

Thus an embryo, which is not yet viable, also comes under this definition as it possesses a soul. Islam affords a fetus all the rights which belong to a human being. It needs to be nurtured, taken care of, and be well-provided for even before it is born. Therefore, abortion cannot be allowed at any stage except when the well-being of the mother is threatened. From the *ahadith* (recorded sayings) of the Holy Prophet it is known that in the case of a pregnant woman's murder or a forced miscarriage, the Holy Prophet would always prescribe *Qisas* (payment) for the unborn child. Renowned reporter of Prophet Muhammad's^{sa} sayings, Abu Hurairah^{ra} relates:

“Allah's Apostle gave a verdict regarding an aborted fetus of a woman from Bani Lihyān that the killer (of the fetus) should give a male or female slave (as a *Diya* or ransom) but the woman who was required to give the slave died, so Allah's Apostle gave the verdict that her inheritance be given to her children and her husband and the *Diya* be paid by her *Asaba*.” ^[8]

In another narration by Abu Hurairah^{ra}, we read:

“Two women from the tribe of

Hudhail (fought with each other) and one of them threw (a stone at) the other, causing her to have a miscarriage and Allah's Apostle gave his verdict that the killer (of the fetus) should give a male or female slave (as a *Diya*).” ^[9]

According to Islam, life begins the moment conception occurs; though the fetus is still in an animal-like state. After one hundred and twenty days it develops qualities which distinguish humans from animals, including the power of reasoning and the ability to differentiate between right and wrong. At this stage it is able to survive on its own and becomes more like a fully-grown person. In its primitive state (less than 120 days old), it is unable to live on its own, yet possesses a soul and the potential to grow into an adult person. ^[10]

A Matter of “Personal” Property

The pro-choice movement argues that women should be in total control of their pregnancies simply because their body belongs to them and they should always decide for themselves. Islam does not agree with this absolute point of view. It does respect the privacy of a person but not at the cost of a life. It is Allah who creates life in the womb of a mother. As women, the decision is not laid in our hands alone to decide the fate of a fetus. It is more like a trust given bestowed upon women to protect and nurture. Furthermore, everyone is endowed with many faculties and one way of showing gratitude to God is to use these faculties to the fullest. If the argument concerning a person's right to privacy – as presented by pro-choice proponents – is accepted, then it will produce chaos in society. Everyone will give preference to his and her own de-

sires and will not care for anyone else. Islam is a religion of peace and believes in equal rights for everyone, but it also defines the boundaries of each person so that the circles of their personal lives do not overlap and result in the deprivation of the rights of anyone else. Islam sets limit for everyone and teaches its followers to practice restraint. It presents a concept of a selfless and compassionate society. It discourages all selfish and self-centered tendencies. When we examine the reason behind seeking an abortion, we realize that the support for this action is an outcome of the selfishness of a person.

On Birth Control, Scale of Punishment

While Islam encourages procreation, it also permits birth control to some extent. Abortion, however, when the life is given shape (which again occurs approximately 120 days after conception), at which time it can survive as an independent soul, is illegal. As far as punishment regarding abortion in the first stage is concerned, it is definitely less than the punishment for abortion in the second period, which is more akin to murder of a human than the previous one. To use contraceptive measures is obviously less like a murder, much less though it graduates into that ultimately. ^[11]

This point of view can be further clarified if we compare the attitude of Islam towards sex with that of American society. Two extremes are found in America's predominantly Christian society. Some people believe in free sex and view it as a source of personal amusement. On the other hand, according to the Bible, sex is considered a filthy sin which deprives a person of commun-

ion with God. That is why Christianity promotes an ascetic life among its priests. These two extremes have given way to chaos in society. The cases of sexual perversion are rampant in the Church. For the rest of the society, a wayward, morally lewd lifestyle is the most preferred way to live. Abortion is seen as the best solution to pregnancies which are an outcome of free sex. On the contrary, Islam presents a very balanced point of view. It forbids sexual promiscuity and promotes marriage. It believes in the sanctity of marriage and encourages a very cordial and loving relationship between a husband and wife. Furthermore, it honors sexual intercourse as a means of creating life, which is one of the fundamental goals of marriage. Thus no one is allowed to play with life or kill an unborn child without a justifiable reason. The family is the basic unit of an Islamic society and children play a very important part in the shaping of a family.

Do Abortions Reduce Crime?

Some pro-choice advocates contend that by legalizing abortions, the crime rate has been greatly reduced as unwanted children are more likely to become criminals. It is argued that in the U.S. in particular, the crime rate has been reduced as a result of the legalization of abortion through *Roe vs. Wade*. Pro-life proponents counter this argument by pointing out its discrepancies. Steven Levitt of the University of Chicago and John Donahue of Yale University wrote a controversial paper entitled, "The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime." The paper was published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* in 2001 and offered evidence that the falling U.S. crime rate of the 1990s was due in part to the legalization of abortion due to the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973. They argued that the crime rate had fallen eighteen years after abortion was legalized. The crime rate was less in the nineties as compared to that in the 1970s and 1980s. The states that legalized abortion earlier saw a decrease in the crime rate earlier. Experts criticized this theory for its vagueness and statisticians found many flaws in it. It was challenged by the Federal Reserve Bank

of Boston economist Christopher Foote and Christopher Goetz who showed that the figures given by Levitt and Donahue were not absolute and other factors that could be responsible for this change were completely ignored. A closer look revealed that the abortion rate was much higher during previous years as compared to the crime rate. These calculations are absurd as no one can determine the nature of a baby before it is born, nor can its role in society be determined before it even enters the light of this world. It is just like making a wild guess. Those thousands of aborted fetuses could have been useful additions to society. ^[12]

Is no Baby better than One with Special Needs?

Another argument presented for legalizing abortion is that babies who have serious malignancies or incapacitating maladies can be aborted before they enter this world. Such abnormalities can be detected before a child's birth due to advancements in technology. An abortion would save parents as well as their disabled children from a life full of agony and misery. This kind of attitude is an outcome of a utilitarian society where everything is valued according to its use. Such things as cannot be of any utility are easily discarded. In reference to people, the same attitude apparently prevails. By aborting a disabled child, one mistrusts God Almighty and believes that Allah cannot provide for every need. Allah the Gracious states in the Holy Qur'an many times that He is the Sole Provider for all the needs of His people and no one can truly comprehend the goodness hidden behind His actions. Allah the Exalted even says that people receive provisions for their life due to their children. The following verse, which forbids the killing of children for fear of poverty, states:

"Kill not your children for fear of poverty. It is We Who provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin" (17:32). ^[13]

This selfish attitude of the western society can further be confirmed by a

unique survey done in 1998. An aggregated study was performed in twenty-seven countries to determine the reasons due to which women seek to terminate their pregnancies. ^[14] The study found following common factors:

- Desire to delay or end childbearing
- Socioeconomic concerns including disruption of work or education
- Issues of financial or relationship instability
- Perceived immaturity

All of these reasons are an outcome of a self-centered perspective towards life. They stem from a desire to fulfill only personal desires at the cost of everything else.

In short, abortions are the cruelest way of a selfish society to get rid of the consequences of its wayward lifestyle. Islam, being a religion of peace and harmony, strongly condemns actions which endanger the welfare and wellbeing of the society. It upholds the sanctity of life no matter what the shape or nature of that life is and expects the same behavior from its followers. ♦

Fareeha Haroon is a member of the Women's Media Watch team of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. She resides in

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Real Morality: Does it Exist Without God?

By Dr Tahir Ijaz

The purpose of this paper is to present the theistic contention that without God, there are no objective moral values and increasing atheism in a society leads to moral confusion and paralysis for that society. According to atheists, the concept of a transcendent Supreme Being need not be invoked when discussing right and wrong, whereas theists believe moral values have to be linked to God, and without the reference to the Deity as a standard and source of moral instruction, moral values have no real meaning. When moral values have no real meaning, predictable consequences will follow.

When discussing this subject, it is important to first truly understand the atheistic and theistic world views, for understanding the mindset is crucial for discussing issues of morality.

The atheistic worldview is that each one of us is merely a physico-chemical entity produced by coincidence through random, blind forces of nature. When our bodies expire, there is no afterlife and no accountability for our actions. Humans are no different from trees or animals, living in a tiny corner in a meaningless universe – for we come from nothing and journeying on to nothing. Those in the atheistic camp wonder why they exist at all and marvel how blind forces formed conscious physico-chemical entities called human beings – and how through some cruel irony inanimate matter turned into intelligent creatures (including themselves) capable of thinking of ultimate meaning when there is none in their view. That is not to say atheists do not feel meaning – it is very human to seek it – but in the end the only difference between a human and a rock is that a human seeks significance.

In the theistic worldview, each one of us is a special creation of God the Creator and has an individual relationship with each of us. We did not arrive by accident. He has a plan for each of us. We are not like the plants and animals. We are created in God's image and the choices we make in life can lead one closer to God. This makes us moral agents in the task of following objective moral values. When we die, we expect to be nearer to God and fully expect accountability for our actions on earth. There is thus an animating sense of purpose in the theistic camp as every act is consequential.

From the atheistic perspective morality is nothing more than a biological adaptation, an aid to survival as life evolved.

However it cannot be denied that it is more than an evolutionary tool and deep down we all agree there are objective moral values. Objective moral values as defined by philosopher William Craig are:

“Values that are valid and binding whether anybody believes in them or not. Thus to say, for example that the Holocaust was objectively wrong is to say that it was wrong even though the Nazis who carried it out thought it was right and that it would still be wrong even if the Nazis had won World War II and succeeded in exterminating and brainwashing everyone who disagreed with them.” (*God?* p. 17)

In addition to the above example cited by Craig, take also the case of a society long ago that sanctioned the killing of newborn girls. All would agree that even if that society justified (or tolerated) the practice in the name of preserving social order and family pride, we would

still call it a moral abomination. The same would apply for rape, cruelty and child abuse. There are moral absolutes.

If objective good and evil exists, then there must be a way of differentiating between good and evil. Accordingly, there must be an objective moral law which provides the foundation for differentiating between good and evil. The moral standard cannot be different for each person, but a *transcendent* standard must exist which all must abide by, which leads to God as the source. Invoking God as the source of the standard makes perfect sense otherwise moral values have no real meaning and would only be a matter of personal taste.

Self-sacrifice is a positive moral objective value. In the case of altruism, some risk their life to save lives of countless others, risking their DNA and chance of reproducing, which is counterintuitive to the concept of Darwinian natural selection which operates on the individual and not a group in the ongoing struggle of survival of the fittest. One really wonders therefore if moral values are really just an evolutionary byproduct, like teeth or hair as some atheists claim.

To avoid this difficulty, Dawkins in his writings admits altruism is an aberration having nothing to do with Darwinian mechanics, but has a rush of good feeling about this moral value. The paradox in his thinking is striking: here he seemingly upholds a standard of good and evil (a moral law) yet denies any standard in his very same writings. In the same way he holds up a standard when he writes that religious beliefs are like viruses, infecting and killing entire societies. He was again recently quoted in *Time* magazine as categorically denying any transcendent moral standard:

“I don't believe that there is hanging out there, anywhere, something called good and something called evil” (*Time*, Nov 13, 2006, p. 55).

If moral values are just byproducts in the struggle of survival of the fittest, what does this say to a person, especially in his/her formative years with this belief? Why do good? If there is no God, what's special about other human beings say compared to dogs and cats? This has real implications. In informal surveys, when presented with the theoretical question of whose life would you save a dog you love or a human being unknown to you, unbelievably, most secular people tend to choose saving the life of the animal over the human being (*Jewish World Review*, D. Prager, February 2005). The

cause for this mentality is simple. With increasing denial of the authority of higher values, such as Divine scriptures, people increasingly make moral decisions based on how they feel. Since they feel more for their pet dog, those without a moral instruction manual simply choose to do what they feel, keeping in mind human worth is not above animals in an atheistic worldview as mentioned.

What's more, in the atheistic worldview, any immoral action, say murder, is considered immoral *only* because the concept of morality is linked to contract behavior in a society. There is no other reason. Murdering is not socially advantageous and therefore condemned. However, note that this does not make murder *objectively* wrong in the atheistic view, for morality is relative.

Few atheists have the intellectual honesty to admit that morality in their view is indeed relative, only a matter of personal taste or one society's opinion. One such atheist is Joel Holman, host of a popular website espousing atheism. Describing the murderous practices of the headhunters of Borneo, who pride themselves in killing an enemy solely to prove themselves worthy of a mate, he writes that he could never bring himself to call them 'evil' since “they are not evil by their standards” (MinisterTurnsAtheist.org, section: Morality without God).

Here is intellectual clarity coming from the atheist – there is no God as the *transcendent* source of morality who says murder is wrong, and so it is merely one man's or society's opinion. Without a reference to God whose commands constitutes source of objective moral values, there is no meaning to morality and behaving morally, for “without God there is no absolute right and wrong that imposes itself on our conscience” (*God?*, p. 18). In this context of moral relativism, saying murder is wrong is as meaningless as saying painting your house the color purple is wrong.

What's fascinating is that even in the example cited by the atheist Holman, one finds a glaring contradiction in his thinking, as with Dawkins: he states that though this violent society in Borneo has been “touched by a hint of civilization,” violence continues. In the same breath he is holding up for them a standard to follow, a way to halt the violence only when they fully embrace “civilization”. Moral law raises its head again, and despite the talk of moral relativism, moral absolutes have a deep down appeal, but not readily admitted as the notion leads directly to God.

Another point to consider is how good

beliefs must transform into good, moral actions. If forbearance is another example of a good moral quality as it admittedly is, how does it result in a moral obligation to be forbearing? Who lays the obligation on the person to be forbearing? The fact is moral obligation is unintelligible without reference to God.

The existence of moral law among human beings is but one of many signposts of God's existence. If God exists and created the universe, He himself could not be in His creation since that would make Him part of the creation in the same way an artist is never physically in his own painting. The only way God would try to influence humans therefore towards His direction would be to put into man's conscience concepts of right and wrong – a moral law and compass. The famous philosopher Immanuel Kant stated precisely the same. He wrote that one evidence of the existence of God lay in the fact that in the nature of each human being was a moral law which formed his/her conscience. This is indeed the story of human life on a daily basis – the practice of appealing to some higher standard of behavior is invoked constantly at the individual and societal level.

Man is naturally drawn to God, the source of goodness. No one is arguing that all atheists are of ill conduct and by the same token no one is arguing that belief in God automatically confers on the individual righteous conduct. There is belief and then there is *belief*. Belief in God in the real sense means following his commands and realizing what we do (or not do) is not inconsequential. Such realization of accountability pushes one off the couch to do even more above and beyond our basal setting wired in by God to follow a moral law.

Heady theology and philosophy aside, is there empirical evidence of differences in the moral conduct of atheists and believers? If the former camp sees life as having no ultimate meaning, see themselves and others as no different from inanimate matter or animals, consider noble deeds as a misfiring of Darwinian behavior, and believe that there is no accountability to a transcendent Consciousness as the source of morals, and therefore deny absolute moral truths, then we would expect differences.

Indeed, we do. Most sociological studies find that people of faith are less materialistic and thus are happier, more life-affirming, less anti-social, and more charitable. There is evidence that religiously active people commit fewer crimes and have a lower incidence of substance abuse.

Only recently, in December 2006, the Heritage Foundation published a research thesis quoting ample sociological studies examining the role of religious life on American society. The conclusions were not surprising. Religious belief and practice are associated with stronger parent-child relation-

ships; greater educational aspirations, especially among the poor; higher levels of work habits; higher levels of wellbeing and happiness; higher level of community cohesion; higher rates of charitable giving and volunteering; less abuse of alcohol and drugs; less suicide ideation; less juvenile crime and less domestic violence. Not all facets can be discussed here, but two points will be highlighted: suicide rates and charitable giving.

Virtually every study finds a higher rate of suicide among atheists compared to theists. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in a landmark study that suicide is far more common in societies exhibiting high levels of atheism compared to theistic societies, despite the fact atheistic belief is more common in countries that are economically developed with little poverty, good housing, and good healthcare and ample recreational opportunities. One of the major causes of suicide is a feeling of hopelessness, and it is very revealing that suicide occurs more often in societies which have tremendous material comforts, where atheism is more prevalent.

On the issue of charity, volunteerism and civic duty, the differences between secular individuals and religious individuals are dramatic. According to a recent study from the Hoover Institute, charitable giving among religious people is immensely greater than secularists, controlling for all possible confounding factors such as socioeconomic status, education and political affiliation. The study found that religions engender charitable behavior in many more ways beyond donating money as revealed by the fact religious people were far more likely to volunteer to help the disabled, the poor and elderly. The study quoted sociologist Robert Bellah for the possible reason for the observation: "religion provides a conception, even if rudimentary, of how one should live...one's obligation to God involves one's life at work as well as in the family, what one does as a citizen as well as how one treats one's friends" (*Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 1985). The obvious conclusion: religious life is good for a society.

One can see the transformation society undergoes when it disintegrates from a theistic outlook with adherence to absolute values to an atheistic one of moral relativism. In Europe and North America a decrease in religious values over several decades has led to an 'anything goes' selfish culture mired in 'feel good' situational ethics. Rampant materialism, drugs, suicide, greed and lust have increased. Sexual anarchy does not even spare children. Such changes are not due only to increase of atheism and secularism, but also due to lack of true God consciousness in the hearts of the 'believers', the theists as well. Increasing numbers of people who may still cling to the idea of God's existence pay only lip service to God's existence and exhibit a *de facto*

atheism as reflected in their conduct in daily life.

One frequent charge may be refuted briefly here. It is alleged that most wars are caused by religious faith and that by adopting an atheistic ideology, societies would fare better. This concept is bandied about as *de facto* truth, whereas the charge is utterly false. The reader is invited to pick up a book on the history of human warfare and read. Most wars are waged for economic and territorial reasons. While it is true many conflicts have occurred on account of religious belief *per se*, by far the most common reason is just *belief*. People harbor different beliefs which may lead to conflict. In the past century the most lives lost to warfare (in World Wars I and II) were due to differences in *secular* beliefs. A secular regime in Germany and the openly atheistic Russia killed untold millions.

However that is still not all. A closer look at many of the so-called religious conflicts belies political overtones and many evil ruling classes throughout history have misused religion to attain certain political ends. In this situation too, many times religion is not so much the cause of the conflict, but may become a motivational agent to sustain a war. Wars are always fought in the name of some good value, be it democracy, freedom or religion, whereas the underlying motives are very often different.

There can be no more fitting way to close than by quoting Khalifatul Masih IV, Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ra}, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community an erudite scholar:

"Man cannot live at peace with himself nor can peace be vouchsafed for society without this formula; no other formula can work. It is only the love of God which can bring about true respect for His creation...The vacuum filled by the non-existence of God is suddenly filled by man's ego. It is a very naïve and extremely ignorant philosophy that man can live without God. What atheism ultimately achieves is not just the death of one God but it suddenly brings to life a myriad of gods. Every conscious being that exists, suddenly acquires the role of a god unto himself or itself. Ego, selfishness and a total commitment to serve one's own end grows stronger and all-powerful.

Societies which are built with the bricks of such individuals always remain egoistic, and self oriented. There is no logic left in being beneficial to others without an ulterior motive. There is no external reference point left in the form of a beneficent God Who is the only binding and meeting point of all forms of creation" (*Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*, p. 272). ♦

Tahir Ijaz is a regular contributor the Muslim Sunrise. He resides in San Diego, CA.

Understanding the Muslim Next Door

Insights into the recently released Pew Report

By Naser-ud-Din Shams
Muslim Sunrise Staff Editor

Recent media headlines reported that over 25% of Muslims

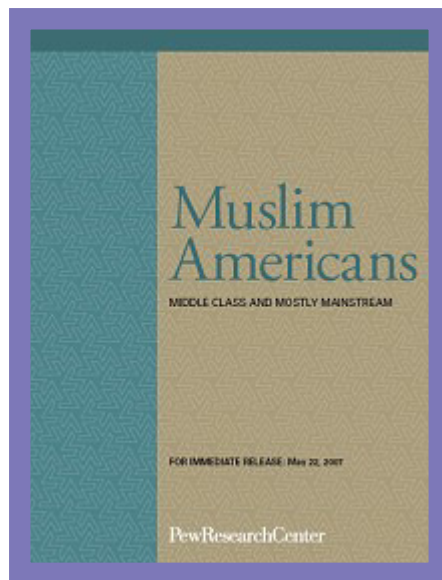
under the age of 30 support suicide bomb attacks. The source cited was the recently released Pew Report dated May 22, 2007. Unfortunately, the media missed the primary message of the report.

News coverage of the Pew Report illustrates why there is considerable mistrust with the media. In fact, the report itself cites that 57% of American Muslims feel the media's coverage of Islam is generally unfair. The wealth of information contained in the Pew Report was almost entirely overlooked. That information deserves to be highlighted and balanced with a Muslim perspective.

Background

The Pew Report documents the first nationwide survey to measure the demographics, attitudes, and experiences of Muslim Americans. The report is entitled *Muslim Americans* with a subtitle *Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream*. It is a 102 page report documenting the answers given by 1,050 American Muslims to a series of questions aimed at understanding what happens when Islam and America mix.

A few concerns arise when evaluating the background and approach to the survey. First,



as the American government has been infringing upon personal freedoms, wise Muslims may be less than forthcoming about their true feelings on sensitive issues. Second, the report sought over 50% of its respondents (533 to be exact) from a commercial list “based on an analysis of first and last names common among Muslims” (Pew Report, p. 58). This effectively excludes converts who kept their original legal names, whatever ethnic origin they may be. In addition, spellings of Muslim names in English contain a high degree of variance. Third, with such a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, there is a broad spectrum of subjectivity in how the respondents may have viewed questions. For instance, one question asked feelings related to “American customs” (p. 33). Some may perceive American customs as “having a beer with the guys,” whereas others may see them as simply wearing American clothing like jeans. Obviously, interpretation drives the response.

Results

In general, Muslim Americans appear to be well integrated into American society. The majority of respondents felt favorably about the communities they live in, and consider themselves content. Although 54% of the respondents felt dissatisfied with “the way things were going in this country,” it remains unclear if this sentiment was aimed at the economy, political situation, or issues of morality. In relation to lifestyle, 43% felt that Muslims living in the U.S. should adopt American customs and ways of life, and the major-

ity, 63%, did not feel there was a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in modern society.

Over 70% of those surveyed believed that a willingness to work hard pays off for Americans. However, African American Muslims disagreed. The Report states, “More generally, native-born African American Muslims are the most disillusioned segment of the U.S. Muslim population. When compared with other Muslims in the U.S., they are more skeptical of the view that hard work pays off, and more of them believe that Muslim immigrants in the U.S. should try to remain distinct from society. They are also less satisfied with the way things are going in the United States. Just 13% of African American Muslims express satisfaction with national conditions, compared with 29% of other native-born Muslims, and 45% of Muslim immigrants” (p. 6).

American Converts to Islam

The Pew Report noted 23% of the respondents had converted to Islam at some point in their lives. The majority of these converts were previously Christian (81%), as follows: Protestants (67%), Roman Catholic (10%), and Orthodox (4%). Fifteen percent of converts stated they had no religion, and were either atheist or agnostic.

The majority of converts accepted Islam when they were under 35 years of age, and based it upon religious beliefs and practices. Approximately 18% converted for reasons related to family or marriage.

Religious Identity

American Muslims are still holding strongly to the Faith. Seventy-two percent responded that religion is *very important* to their lives, with another 18% stating it was *somewhat important*. The majority, 61%, of American Muslims pray daily, and 74% are satisfied with the quality of mosques available within their vicinities. However, 49% felt that mosques should keep out of political matters. This could be a reaction to events in which mosque officials were investigated and taken into custody.

Other religious activities remain strong as well. When asked about giving charity or *zakat*, 76% responded it was *very important*, with another 14% stating it was *somewhat important*. In regard to fasting in Ramadhan, 77% responded it was *very important*, with



another 11% stating it was *somewhat important*.

Some responses were surprising and outright comical. Although 96% of the respondents stated they believed in One God, Allah, there were 4% who either did not believe (2%) or did not know/refused to answer (2%). Similarly, when asked if they believed in the Prophet Muhammad (s), 3% said they did not, and another 3% did not know/refused to answer. These are the most fundamental and defining beliefs of a Muslim.

Also surprising were the results to the question, “Do you think of yourself first as an American or first as a Muslim?” Twenty-eight percent responded that they saw themselves as Americans first. This number appears unusually high – as if these Muslims feel they will be questioned about their passports on the Day of Judgment. However, putting things in perspective once again, these responses could have been driven by fear of surveillance (54% felt the U.S. government singles out Muslims for surveillance).

War on Terror

Muslim Americans voiced opposition to America’s War on Terror. Over half (55%) indicated they felt the U.S. led war on terrorism was not a sincere effort to reduce international terrorism. Seventeen percent either refused to answer or said they didn’t know, which may indicate their fear to answer the question.

Just under 70% of respondents disapprove of President Bush’s performance, with another

16% refusing to comment. Clearly, American Muslims are opposed to the decision to use military force in both, Afghanistan and Iraq. This strong response is most likely the result of the weak reasoning and deliberate manipulation of evidence cited by the U.S. to justify the war.

Suicide Bombs

The alarming suicide bomb statistic highlighted in media headlines breeds more confusion than clarity. The question asked in the survey was, “Can suicide bombing of civilian targets to defend Islam be justified?” This wording is less than clear. By definition, one cannot defend Islam by killing civilians. To state it another way, how can you defend yourself from someone who is not attacking you? Had the question been, “Does Islam allow the killing of innocent civilians?” the results would have been considerably different.

Inclusion of the verbiage *to defend Islam* in the question naturally throws Muslims off, as many would sacrifice their own lives for the defense of Islam. This is very different from the suicide bombing of civilian targets who are not fighting Muslims.

This is why the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community condemns all attacks on innocent civilians, be they suicide bombings or not. We firmly hold to this stance irrespective of the religion or race of civilians, and regardless of whether a state of war exists or peace. This was the preaching and practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}.

Suicide bombing, itself, presents a source of confusion. As long as there is a state of war and the target is a valid one (i.e., a military one) bombs can be launched from whatever means a fighting party has. The American military delivers bombs through sophisticated machinery and planes, whereas poorer nations may deliver them via suicide bombers. Until a more potent method of resistance is identified, these nations will fight by whatever means they have against an occupying force. The point is a simple one – this is not a clear cut “black and white” scenario.

Further, with all this “grey,” the respondents’ true answers were not fairly presented by the media. Of the reported 26% of American Muslims under 30 who felt suicide bombing could be justified, 11% stated it could *rarely* be justified, with 15% stating it could *often* or *sometimes* be justified. The Pew Report did not break out the percent stating *often* in comparison against those who stated *sometimes*. There is a big difference between the two.

The responses from the overall group of American Muslims surveyed indicated that 1% felt suicide bombings could *often* be justified, 7% *sometimes* justified, and 5% *rarely* justified. Given the lack of clarity involved, these numbers cannot be relied upon as painting a true picture of Muslim views.

Conclusion

Overall, the Pew Report appears reasonably accurate and is a good first step. It’s certainly headed in the right direction in understanding the Muslim next door. As would be expected from such an ambitious initiative, there are improvement opportunities which stand to further clarify the true sentiment of the target audience.

The results indicate that American Muslims are a widely diverse group representing every major ethnic, racial, economic, and cultural profile. Like most, they’re aware of what’s going on around them, and they react while trying to hold on to their principles. In summary, the Pew Report confirms what we should have already known about American Muslims – they’re just ordinary people who are trying to make a better living.

(Footnotes)

1 The Pew Report identified Protestant as including: Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Pentecostal, Jehovah’s Witness, Church of Christ, etc. (Pew Report, page 88).

Editor's note: The following article was printed in the April 17, 2007 edition of the Kalamazoo Gazette and serves as CRC's quarterly response to a particular religious issue in the media.

"Ahmadiyya Muslims Believe Jesus did not Die on Cross"

By Ayesha Mangla

What a coincidence that the alleged discovery of Jesus^{as} Christ's remains surfaced when Christians all over the world were preparing to celebrate Easter.

Different religions offer different views of the life and death of Jesus^{as}. Some experts believe that Jesus^{as} had a death wish. He asked Peter to betray him. How could he have wished for his death when he prayed in anguish, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

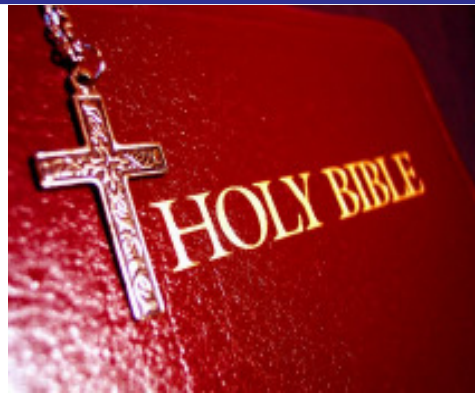
A different perspective on this issue is presented by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian, India, who claimed to be the Promised Messiah, awaited by various religions in the latter days. While Ahmad^{as} draws upon many sources ranging from the Qur'an to the ancient Buddhist records to medical and historical books, one need not even look beyond the Bible to see the merit of his claims.

In his book, *Jesus in India*, Ahmad^{as} provides compelling evidence that Jesus neither died upon the cross, nor ascended bodily to heaven; instead, he was miraculously saved. Thereafter, he migrated in search of the lost sheep of Israel as he had promised.

By following the same route of migration as the 10 lost tribes of Israel, Jesus^{as} must have traveled through Afghanistan on his way to Kashmir, India. There is strong historical evidence that the people of Kashmir and Afghanistan are the progeny of those migrant Jewish tribes.

According to Ahmad^{as}, Jesus^{as} later died a natural death at the age of 120 and is buried in Srinagar, Kashmir. The inscription of Yuz Asif (Hebrew) on the tomb refers to Jesus Christ^{as}. Thus, Jesus^{as} accomplished his mission by delivering the message of God to all 12 tribes of Israel.

Founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's understanding of the crucifixion is that it was



It is evident from the Bible that his legs were not broken as were those of the other two criminals crucified with him.

an unsuccessful attempt on Jesus's^{as} life. After a few hours of intense suffering, Jesus^{as} was taken down from the cross in a deep coma.

It is evident from the Bible that his legs were not broken as were those of the other two criminals crucified with him. He could not have been dead because blood and water gushed out from his body when the soldier pierced his side. Scientific fact dictates that blood and water cannot gush out of a dead body because there is no heartbeat.

Also, several circumstances were created by God to save Jesus^{as} because He loved him and had not "forsaken him" and Jesus^{as} had not yet completed his mission.

When Pilate presided at his court, his wife sent word to him not to have anything to do with the death of Jesus^{as} because she had a dream that night which troubled her. Therefore, Pilate scheduled the crucifixion for late Friday afternoon, so that the body would not hang for too long before Sabbath (when it was unlawful to let anyone remain on the cross).

Then there was a severe dust storm that darkened the earth for three hours and seemed to have hastened the onset of Sabbath. Fearing the punishment for violating the sanctity of Sabbath, the Jews hastily took Jesus^{as} off the cross. When Joseph^m asked Pilate for Jesus's^{as} body he was surprised to hear that Jesus^{as} was already dead in such a short period.

Jesus's^{as} disciples kept him in a sepulcher-like tomb and applied myrrh and aloe to his wounds. Then a violent earthquake removed the huge stone from the tomb's entrance that helped Jesus and his disciples to leave the

tomb after three days, as Jonah^{as} escaped the fish.

Jesus^{as} had prophesied that "no sign would be shown unto the people other than the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Also, Jesus^{as} told his people that they were not the only sheep, but that he was sent by God to other sheep as well. But since Jesus^{as} never left Judea before the crucifixion, it had to be only after his crucifixion that he traveled to the new abode of the 10 tribes of Israel to complete his mission. Jesus^{as} had to leave Judea in secrecy because no state would provide legal protection to an escapee. Thus, he left the Roman territory for Galilee, a land of freedom to fulfill the prophecy of reaching those 10 tribes.

Jesus^{as} himself ruled out the question of being a ghost. He not only asserted to be the Jesus^{as} who was crucified, but also asked his disciples to touch his wounds, which were still fresh. Later he ate fish and bread because he was alive and hungry. Jesus^{as} hid from the public and the government, even after his wounds were healed, because he was mortal and he and his followers did not want the Romans to attempt to crucify him again.

During all this, Jesus's^{as} followers were compelled to concoct the story that Jesus ascended bodily to heaven. They were in a very difficult situation. If they admitted to Jesus's^{as} death, they would have to produce his body. They would also be admitting that Jesus^{as} was a false prophet because he would have died an accursed death.

But, if they said he did not die on the cross, they would have been forced to produce him to be crucified again. Thus, Ahmad^{as} asserts the story of the resurrection eventually became a dogma that is followed by millions today.

This subject has been discussed in detail in *Jesus in India and Christianity: A Journey from Facts to Fiction*. These can be accessed online at www.alislam.org. ♦

Ayesha Mangla is a regular contributor to the Muslim Sunrise. She resides in Portage, Michigan.

NEWS VIEWS AND REVIEWS: PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Muslim Sunrise contributors have been actively engaged in responding to the American press on articles of religious importance. Some samples of their recent published responses are below:

“Muslim majority must be willing to take stand against injustice”

By Saad Ahmad

(Printed in The Oshkosh Northwestern (Wisconsin), March 6, 2007, as an Opinion-Editorial)

Whenever we talk about extremist elements among Muslims that is always coupled by a disclaimer about a silent majority that thinks otherwise. I am a Muslim and understand that Islam has little to do with the extremists and terrorists — but I am having second thoughts about those who call themselves Muslims.

A couple of months ago, six Imams were removed from a US Air flight because the fact that they prayed before boarding the plane was deemed suspicious. It was a big news item and Muslims all across the US were outraged. Then just a few days later some Muslims were expelled from the country for offering the same prayers (<http://www.thepersecution.org/ai/aius070117sa.html>) and there is little reaction from the Muslims. Same imams who were so distressed about their own flights probably support the expulsion of this minority sect from Saudi Arabia. What an irony! Removal from a plane and removal from the country for the same action.

Then we come to the next month, this time it is Pakistan. A Christian woman is in jail because some Mullah accused her of blasphemy (<http://www.persecution.org/suffering/newsdetail.php?newscode=4562>). In Pakistan just accusing someone of blasphemy is enough to ruin their life and if that poor soul belongs to a minority sect or a different religion then the country's judicial system is of little assistance. This is the same country that accused and sentenced a 14 year old Christian boy to death for blasphemy (<http://www.domini.org/openbook/pakblasph.htm>).

So where is this silent majority? Are they so silent that they are irrelevant? Referring to a spineless majority just for the sake of



political correctness is of no use. I would also let you in on a little secret; they are only silent about the crimes that are done by the Mullah against the minorities — otherwise the majority is quite vocal. Most of the mosques in US are packed to the capacity on Fridays. Imams are busy delivering their irrelevant sermons about the crimes being conducted against the Muslims but have little to offer about these Muslim countries. Islamic Circle of North America (<http://www.icna.org>) is holding a rolling fast for a detained professor but offers little about the expelled Muslims or the distressed Christians. Islamic Society of North America (<http://www.isna.com>) is equally silent about such crimes.

The affairs of the Muslims are in a sad state. When it comes to the religion Muslims believe that they are being victimized by the west — not realizing that most of the crimes are done by the Muslims against the Muslims. This silent majority needs to become more vocal because if they do not, they would become irrelevant. The majority of the Muslims act like a chicken with its head cut off; they are running around making all sort of noises — but have no direction.

Islam is a great religion that offers peace. It implores on its followers to stand up for justice. It equates accepting injustice to hypocrisy. When we see injustice we should try to remedy that not look the other way. If the injustice is in our backyards then it becomes an even bigger responsibility. If we look at the state of affairs in these Muslim countries, US and Canada are more Islamic than all of them combined.

In order to get more information about Islam, please visit <http://www.alislam.org>. ♦

Northwestern Community Columnist Saad Ahmad is originally from Pakistan and has been living in Wisconsin since 1990. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and then stayed in the area. He works as a computer software consultant.

Opinion Page Editorial

By Ronald D. Hubbs Jr. (Abdur Rahim)

(Printed in the The Wall Street Journal, April 6, 2007, in response to “Playboy in Indonesia”)

Mr. Dhume ridiculously wraps himself in the “noble cause” of freedom for smut peddlers as one against terrorism. He states that “the affair captures . . . the Muslim country’s steady slide toward intolerance,” but the slippery slope he fails to mention is pornography. Here in the U.S., indecency used to be considered a woman pictured in her undergarments, now hardcore porn is a widespread multi-billion-dollar publicly traded business. Child porn, Internet predation, STDs and sexual assaults are now endemic. While I am no proponent of the fanatical tactics of Jemaah Islamiyah (I am an Ahmadi Muslim whom they brutally persecute), the overall opposition to pornographic license is a justified one.

Ignored is the sex-slave/child prostitute industry of many nearby Asian countries (largely fueled by “liberated” Western pervers) and the meteoric rise of AIDS in the region. Are we to believe that these realities have nothing to do with the ever-increasing laxity and spread of “free” moral values? Mr. Dhume attempts to frame this as a “choice between an open society and a repressive one.” It is not. The issue is people voicing dissent against harmful trends engulfing their lives. Democracy in action. Why is it when Rudy Giuliani cleaned up the filth in Times Square he was hailed a hero, but when Muslims in their own lands try to avoid such degeneration in the first place they are accused of “Islamic totalitarianism”? ♦

Ronald Hubbs resides in Chino, California.

“Polygamy”

By Sardar Anees Ahmad

(Printed in the Finger Lakes Times (New York), May 2007, as an Opinion-Editorial)

“Polygamy.” While an image of Islam often appears, what do other faiths say? Hinduism has long permitted Niyoga — that is, allowing a woman to copulate with up to eleven men to bear a child if her husband was sterile or passed without offspring. Indian law allowed polygamy until passage of the 1954 Hindu Marriage Act. A 1975 committee reported that in India 5% of Hindu marriages were polygamous, compared with 4% of Muslim marriages. Buddhism considers marriage a secular institution, and is consequently mute regarding polygamy. Hence, Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhists commonly have a consort in addition to their spouse. Sikhism allows polygamy, as four of ten Sikh gurus were polygamists.

Hebrew Scriptures document approximately forty polygamists, particularly Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. In fact, Jewish law allowed polygamy up to the 11th century when Rabi Gurdshom Benjahuda passed a Signord. Even so, Septtranic Jews practiced polygamy in Muslim countries until outlawed by Israeli chief Rabainite in 1950. Regarding the New Testament, Jesus Christ declared that he came to fulfill and not to abrogate even a jot of Jewish Law. During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther permitted Philip I of Hesse to practice polygamy, later declaring he could not outlaw polygamy, as “it does not contradict Scripture.” In fact, the Church only recently outlawed polygamy.

Indeed, the Holy Qur’an is the only religion text restricting polygamy. Islam greatly reduced the permissible number, as Arabs had hundreds of wives. Furthermore, Islam never mandated polygamy. Polygamy is only allowed when certain circumstances arise, particularly relating to orphans, demonstrating Islam’s primary concern with that much-neglected societal section. Yet Islam prohibits polygamy to men who cannot fairly deal with an additional wife. Polygamy preserves morality during wartime, when the male population considerably diminishes, leaving scores of women as widows. If not re-married, promiscuity and prostitution result (as occurred after the World Wars). In 1650, the Nürnberg parliament decreed every man could marry up to ten women as many men perished during the Thirty Years’ War. In such



Early Mormon leaders in America serve time for polygamy.

Furthermore, Islam never mandated polygamy. Polygamy is only allowed when certain circumstances arise, particularly relating to orphans, demonstrating Islam’s primary concern with that much-neglected societal section.

circumstances, polygamy would ultimately increase the diminished male population.

With only 13% of Muslim marriages polygamous today, the rate is far less than the number of Western extramarital affairs. How then can the West point any accusatory finger at an Islamic injunction designed to preserve chastity while preventing immorality?

Still, one may ask why a woman cannot marry more than one husband? In fact, if the philosophy of polygamy were understood, one would prohibit polyandry. If a man marries more than one woman, children will be born from each marriage. However, a woman marrying even a billion men will be impregnated only once. The lineage of the child will be suspect, and which husband will rear the child?

Some question Prophet Muhammad’s morality as a polygamist. Contrarily, Prophet Muhammad never married a woman due to any moral lapse, and in fact leveled the status of women with men. As American Justice Pierre Craibites rightly observes, “Muhammad, 1300 years ago assured to the mothers, wives, and daughters of Islam a rank

and dignity not yet generally assured to women by the laws of the West.” Celibate prior to his first marriage, his wives were widows, ex-slaves, divorcees, only two younger than 36, and only one a virgin. When the Muslims were weak and viciously persecuted, non-Muslims offered beautiful women to curb Islamic preaching — offers he vehemently rejected. After his first marriage, every marriage took place between 624-629 CE, the time of all the battles in his ministry. After peacefully conquering Arabia, he never married again. Who then dare label such a man a womanizer?

As Dr. Annie Besant confirms, “Do you mean to tell me that the man who in the full flush of youthful vigour ... married a woman much his senior, and remained faithful to her for six and twenty years, at fifty years of age when the passions are dying married for lust and sexual passion? Look at the women whom he married, you will find that by every one of them an alliance was made for his people, or something was gained for his followers, or the woman was in sore need of protection.”◆

Sardar Anees Ahmad resides in Waterloo, New York.



Marriage in Islam

**To date or not to date,
that is the question.**

By Rasheed Reno

Marriage is an important institution in all cultures and is the foundation of a family. This topic is of great importance in Islam as marriage is an obligation that each Muslim is expected to fulfill. The relationship of marriage is the only family relationship that involves choice, as all other family relationships are inherited through birth. This makes selecting a spouse one of the most important parts of marriage. Selecting a good spouse can lead to a good and happy marriage and can produce good children. However, the opposite can lead to an unhappy and unsuccessful marriage and can leave one with ill behaved children. It's not a stretch to say that the future of our society depends upon good, healthy marriages.

In Islam there is a certain way of selecting a spouse, as taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, which differs from what is commonly practiced here in the West. The importance of this subject warrants drawing a comparison between the two systems in order to illustrate the advantages of the Islamic system.

The system that is generally practiced here in the West is in no way rigidly defined and will tend to vary from generation to generation and subculture to subculture. It is not based on any religious teaching, but is simply a social practice that has evolved over time into what it is today. This system is based on a practice known as dating. The general practice is that one will date different potential marriage candidates until one finds someone that they “fall in love” with and to whom they will get married. The emotion of love is considered a prerequisite to marriage in this system.

The societal norm is that parents will begin preparing their children for dating while they are still young, sometimes while they are still at the elementary school age. This is usually done by making suggestive comments. It is common to see 10-year-olds or younger children begin to have “boyfriends” or “girlfriends”. This is generally not seen as inappropriate, but seen as cute and innocent. Many children will be actively dating by their adolescent years and the vast majority will be dating by high school. More conservative parents will not allow their children to begin dating until they are in high school. In these years dating is usually done casually with little thought or interest in marriage. The practice usually continues through college and beyond, which is when one finally begins to consider marriage.

In these early years, the dating that takes place is usually perceived as a learning process. The rationale behind this is that if they practice having relationships while they are young, they will be more prepared for marriage when they get older. This is logical in theory, but in practice more often than not it does exactly the opposite. Often a young adult will get involved in such a relationship and grow emotionally attached. The other person may either not be as emotionally attached or undergo a personality change, or maybe they just don’t care as much. At this point the relationship will usually fail, leaving the young adult sad, depressed, heartbroken and, in some cases, emotionally scarred. The usual result of this is not that a person becomes better with relationships; rather s/

he becomes more guarded, suspicious, jealous, and less trusting in their future relationships or marriage. It will likely give him or her a feeling of animosity and can create a sense of pessimism and a habit of failure in future relationships.

One of the common ideas put forth in support of the dating system is that dating is necessary in order to determine whether or not the couple is compatible. It is often said that the couple should live together before getting married to determine if they will be compatible. While this idea may appear to have some validity, it is also very much inadequate. It excludes possibly the greatest part of marriage: children. Anyone who has children knows that a marriage after children is much different than one before children. This type of compatibility test will be of little use when it does not include children. The very idea that one would have to go to such measures to prove their compatibility shows that they are already pessimistic about the success of their relationship. As the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said, “He who enters something with pessimism is responsible for its downfall.”

One feature of dating in the West is that there is usually very little parental involvement. Most parents try to stay out of their children’s relationships and let them handle it alone. Many of the parents that do try to get involved end up in arguments with their children where they are told that it is none of their business. Hollywood seems to glorify this by making countless movies where young couples with disapproving parents run off to Vegas to get married. This is very unfortunate because parents have greater experience in this matter and they know their children and what is good for them. Their years of valuable experience are wasted when they are not involved.

As mentioned earlier, “love” is considered a prerequisite to marriage in the Western practice of dating. This requirement seems to overrule all other qualities to the point that other qualities seem irrelevant. Too often, little consideration is given to the person’s background (religious or otherwise) and no consideration is given to the character, goals, or reputation of the other person. If such qualities are considered, they are usually ranked below physical attraction and financial status. After marriage, it is quite often that

the initial luster and emotion begins to fade and the relationship suffers and often leads to divorce. This is because the initial emotions are usually more of infatuation than love. True love is built through shared experiences — through building a family together and serving God together.

Possibly the greatest flaw in the practice of dating is that by its very nature it fails to instill commitment to the relationship. Many people who date are not looking for a serious commitment and are content with reaping the physical and emotional benefits of the relationship and then simply leaving when they have had enough. Dating can be compared to entering a house but leaving the door open behind you. If one enters the house and leaves the door open there is little to indicate that they plan on staying and that they will leave at the first sign of discomfort. How can a relationship succeed without commitment?

The weakness of the dating system as practiced in the United States is evident by

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the rate of failure in marriages. It is estimated that 40-50% of American adults will go through a divorce at least once in their lifetimes. This is very clear evidence that dating is not the most effective way of finding (and keeping) a spouse and further evidence that dating often does not bring out the right qualities to ensure a successful marriage. This doesn’t imply that every marriage that has come about through dating is unsuccessful. There are many people who have had successful marriages with good children that came about through the dating process. However, the success rate is significantly lower than the Islamic system of marriage.

In Islam, marriage is considered to be an integral part of one’s faith and is obligatory for everyone. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} said that marriage is half of your faith. In the Islamic social structure there is

what is often called an “arranged” marriage prescribed for selecting one’s spouse. The term “arranged marriage” is often misunderstood because it is commonly understood by non-Muslims to mean a marriage that is arranged by parents, where the young men and women getting married have no choice in the matter. This is not the case in an Islamic marriage. Although parents are involved and their permission is necessary, both the bride and groom have the right to choose their spouse. Coercing someone, whether male or female, to marry someone that they do not want to marry is purely un-Islamic.

In Islam, casual dating as practiced in the West is prohibited. One first makes the decision that they are ready for the commitment of marriage before they begin their search for a spouse. This saves one from the heartbreak often associated with learning their partner is not serious about marriage. It also protects one’s reputation from suspicion and being considered as someone who has loose morals going from partner to partner. Once one makes this decision, then the search for a spouse begins. During the entire process, prayer is a crucial factor. Marriage in Islam is done for the sake of God, and His guidance and blessings are needed in order for a marriage to be successful.

One of the main advantages of the Islamic marriage system is that it is based upon an examination of the character of the potential spouse. In this process, physical attraction should not be a major factor; the most important quality should be piety. It is important to know the character of the potential spouse before becoming too emotionally involved, so that such emotions don’t cause one to overlook the weaknesses in their character.

This is where the importance of family involvement fits in. Parental involvement is one of the most important aspects of the Islamic marriage. Parents have the advantage of years of experience and knowing the character of their children. They are able to see from the outside whether a marriage will be good. They can usually see any potential incompatibilities and will be able to look past physical attraction to see if the person has piety in their character. In Islam, if one wishes to marry a person, but the parents do not agree, then the marriage should generally not take place. Also, if the parents think their son or daughter should marry someone, but their child or that person does not agree, then the



One of the main advantages of the Islamic marriage system is that it is based upon an examination of the character of the potential spouse. In this process, physical attraction should not be a major factor; the most important quality should be piety.

marriage also should not place. Both the person getting married and their parents should agree. This helps ensure that a sound decision is made. Another advantage of the parental involvement is that the married couple will know that their in-laws actually like and care about them, otherwise they would not have allowed the marriage to happen. This should avoid much of the feuding with in-laws that occurs in the United States. Parental involvement continues even after the marriage and helps ease any tensions that may arise in the marriage. However, parents also take care to not become controlling, thus avoiding making things worse by placing additional strain on the marriage.

It shouldn’t be thought that because the Islamic marriage system does not require one to become emotionally attached or “fall in love” before marriage, that it is cold and emotionless. Nothing could be further from the truth. In an Islamic marriage, true love is built through the effort and success that is put into the marriage. Instead of love fading

after the marriage takes place, as is often the case in the West, it is just beginning to flourish. From the beginning, both husband and wife give the utmost devotion, without the thought of backing out, because they have given their commitment to make the marriage work. As the relationship moves along, love is built through the experiences of life. The most important reason that this system of marriage is more successful than the Western system of dating is because the spouse was chosen for the sake of God - and true love comes from Him. If one chooses their spouse based upon physical attraction alone, then the marriage may fade as that desire begins to fade. However, if one chooses their spouse because of their piety and devotion to God, then the marriage will be blessed and grow as the couple grows closer to God. ♦

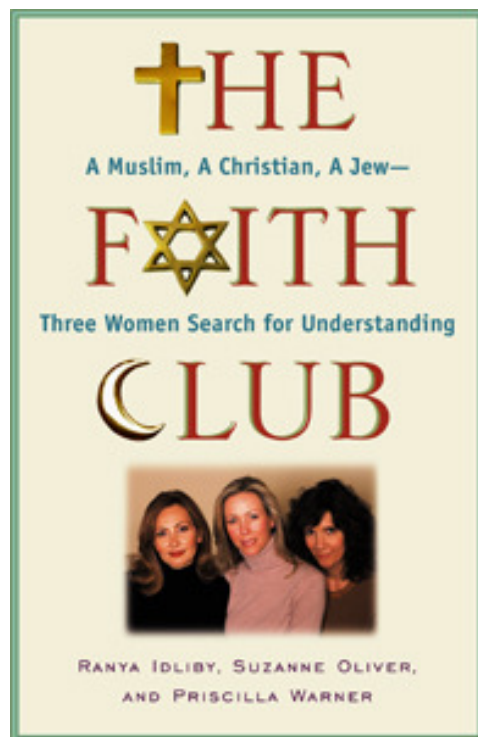
Rasheed Reno is an applications engineer and is president of the Portland Chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. He resides in Hillsboro, Oregon.

NEWS, VIEWS AND REVIEWS - BOOK REVIEW: The Faith Club By Shazia Sohail

The Faith Club: A Muslim, A Christian, A Jew – Three Women Search for Understanding. Authors: Ranya Idliby, Suzanne Oliver, and Priscilla Warner.

The Faith Club is a story of the evolution of a beautiful friendship between three women, one Muslim, another Christian, and the third Jewish. It spans a period of roughly four years that begin with the three women being a little defensive, and slightly guilty about the stereotypes they hold of each other, and ends with each one of them seeing the world through the eyes of others. It is a book that teaches the reader humility and empathy by demonstrating that human beings of varying cultures and religions can have identical concerns and claims to God's love and compassion.

Ranya, a Muslim woman of Palestinian



descent raised in the U.S., has the kind of faith that is passed on from one generation to another and does not feel the need to explore or understand it till she is faced with the dilemma of what to pass on to her children, since Islam had become somewhat of a handicap after 9/11. She reaches out to Suzanne, a Christian, and Priscilla, a Jew, with the hope of highlighting aspects of their religions that unite them, for the benefit of children. It becomes obvious to the reader very early on that the spiritual circumstances of the three women are dissimilar and their struggles unique.

Priscilla had a strong community that she derived much needed strength from but lacked the basic elements of faith like belief in the existence of God, and life after death. In contrast, Ranya possessed firm faith in God's love and benevolence encompassing her but no community with which she felt she could associate herself. Suzanne, on the other hand, was fortunate enough to have both faith and community and through the course of the book one could see the strength of her spirituality and her harmony with the world around her. This aspect of the book underscores the relevance of firm faith in an All-Powerful God, as well as building strong communities through diverse measures.

There are numerous illustrations in this book of human nature, validating and affirming Islamic teachings, even when it is operating in the blind. For example, Suzanne finds herself praying to God alone, and not Jesus^{as}, when she requires the fulfillment

of a need. She also intrinsically understands that the simplicity of a mosque is conducive to focus in prayer, as opposed to the elaborate and ornate decorations in churches that can be very distracting. As Priscilla gains a stronger faith and starts to see the world around her through Ranya's eyes, her panic attacks decrease and she starts to experience inner tranquility. Ranya does not find peace till she finds an imam with whom she can align herself.

Several aspects of the book are humbling and stir compassion in the reader. The spiritual light Ranya finds in reading *Sura Al-Noor* is quite poignant. Also, Suzanne has a stunning dream that strengthens her faltering faith. However, what comes as a complete surprise is the ordinary life of Priscilla, beset by the same issues and weaknesses as everyone else. During the course of reading the book, I realized my own view of Jews was colored by repeated references to them as 'the chosen ones,' and I was somewhat in awe of them. Reading about Priscilla's personal insecurities and humility, as well as the occurrence of cancer in her family, greatly helped me to relate to Jewish women at a more human level and transformed my style of inter-faith discussions with them.

Through this friendship the three women find their individual voices and the confidence to confront bigotry and ignorance. It underscores the importance of a well-rounded personality, stemming from education and travel, in order to cut through the fog of misinformation and arrive at truth. It also manifests the significance of recognizing truth in order to relate to people across cultural divisions. But most importantly, it highlights the supreme worth of grace and elegance when confronted with cynicism.

The book is a must-read as it talks about crossing the barriers of prejudice and ignorance that divide people of various nations. It shakes the reader out of his/her complacent, albeit subconscious, notion that they have sole claim to communion with God and validates the verses of the Holy Qur'an that speaks of God's compassion being universal and salvation the right of good people from all religions. All in all it has the effect of making the reader see the world through eyes endowed with humility, compassion, and enlightenment. ♦

Streams of the Otherworldly Arboretums

(The Sahabi's Encounter)

By Micah Tair

Editor's Note: "Sahabi" refers to a companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}

There once was a *Sahabi* who had risen up in the night
And happened upon his master finishing his ablutions.
Starring in the uppermost horizon of his eyes –
In its gleam – thought he caught a glimpse of a not-so-distant stream.
Upon spinning 'round the harsh desert was reconfirmed

And thus concerned in a moment of down flux he entertained:

'Is God's promise a mirage of the desert?'

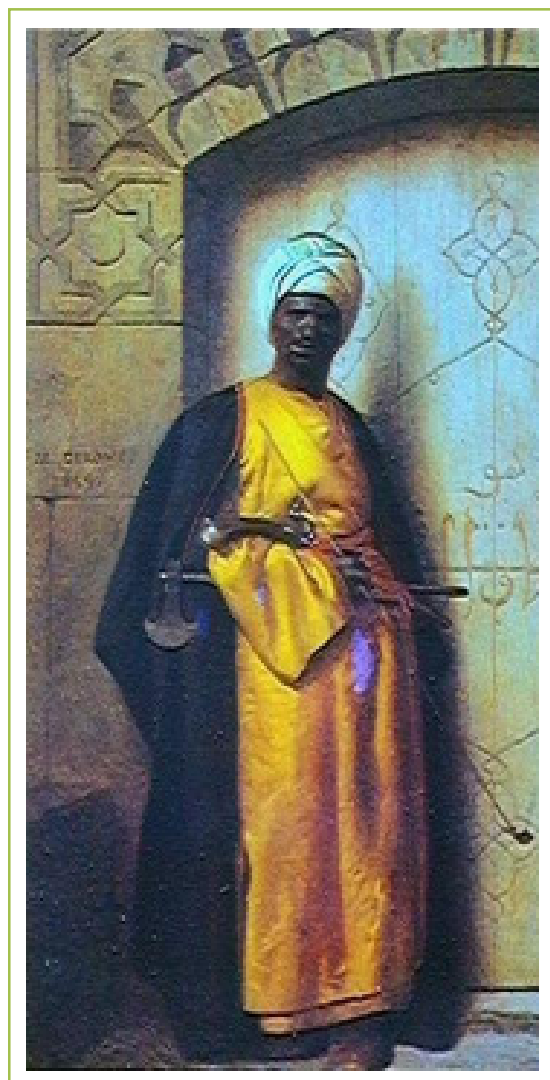
But sure enough the Messenger stood before him

Exhaling breath aromatized by otherworldly arboretums.

Through the darkness his beloved master led him,
And in those footsteps he followed for some time until he
Thought he heard sounds of running water coming from somewhere
Out there beyond the suffering sands that try man so.
Under bare feet he felt a dampening of the earth,
So in gratitude he knelt prostrating his brow at the water's edge.
Heard his master splashing further in – calling out to him.
'How submersed in the stream my master must be,' he thought.
'Will he be completely drowned?'

So he waded in, into the stream, into its deeper waters –
On this, his final night – and found the Messenger floating face up.
As his master looked to the heavens, he looked to his eyes
And thought he saw the moon
A millennium and a half into the future – reflecting.
Thought he saw legions of stars at various stages
From various ages, brightly burning in designated places.

Upon collapsing in battle the following day he was affirmed.
And thus returned in a moment of ascension he ascertained:
'The world was a mirage of the desert in a believer's resolve.'
In this wonderful place of clarity he awaited his master's return,
Eagerly anticipating the long journey they have ahead of them
Into the otherworldly arboretums.



From the Archives: Muslim Sunrise, Second Quarter 1959

An Open Letter to the Conscience of the West

By S. Raymond Dunn

S. Raymond Dunn was an attorney-at-law. He was born in a Jewish family and educated in Christian institutions.

The urgent need for better worldwide understanding is universally recognized. Here, in important areas of the West, amazement is often expressed at apparent lack of understanding throughout much of the world, at lack of “appreciation,” even “resentment,” to which we are “subjected.”

It would be profitable to practice just a bit of the humility, about which so much boasting is heard in important areas of the West. It would be profitable to see in what ways we may be to blame.

One of the most basic and critical of all our shortcomings is our inability to produce great, creative, original, ennobling, inspiring ideas – to captivate the minds and to warm the hearts of peoples everywhere. (As a matter of fact, “produce” is hardly an accurate word; such ideas are produced here – since here as elsewhere throughout the world and throughout history, good, with God’s help, has been made available to men – but such ideas are stifled and not permitted to develop.)

It is not by accident that we cannot develop such ideas. The cause is deeply rooted. It is firmly rooted in the materialism which all our pseudo-pious clichés cannot conceal – but serve only to emphasize.

To put it more precisely and more bluntly, it lies in our widespread materialistic contempt for the wondrous potentialities of the creative grandeur of the spirit of man.

For us to cure ourselves of this disease, we must have a great spiritual revolution. This does not mean hysteria. It does not mean hypocritical platitudes. It does not mean lip-service. It does not mean escapism. It does not mean any of our favorite “five-percenter” substitutes for the one hundred per cent of spirituality which is needed. It does mean sincere, earnest soul-searching and a re-evaluation

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of certain concepts, attitudes and habits which we are now most certain to take for granted.

It means that we, here in key areas of the West, must stop relying, with reference to the production of “ideas,” upon boards and committees, which, after all, are organized with the aim of tax exemption uppermost in the mind. Great, original, inspiring ideas cannot be produced by boards and committees. They never have been so produced. They cannot be so produced.

Great, original, inspiring ideas can be created only within the mystic depths of the individual. Only the individual whose heart is on fire with the flame of idealism and whose brain is dedicated can produce great ideas which lift humanity forward and upward.

The fact that a vast amount of tension and misunderstanding exist between creative individuals and society, here in key areas of the West, is one of the most deplorable examples of the absence of true brotherhood among men, which, in accordance with the Qur’anic warning, so aptly referred to by Dr. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, in his article, “Islam and International Relations,” recently published in the *Muslim Sunrise*, keeps threatening to push mankind to “the brink of a pit of fire.”

“Hold fast, all together, by the rope of God and be not divided; and remember the favor of God which He bestowed upon you when you were enemies and He united your hearts in love, so that by His Grace you became as brothers. You were on the brink of a pit of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does God explain to you His commandments that you may be guided.” (Holy Qur’an 3:104)

“Hold fast, all together . . .”

“... be not divided . . .”

Indeed, one of the most tragic divisions among men in the West is this very division, between the pitifully small creative minority – and, after all, is not every creative individual really a minority of one? – and a suspicious, systematically misunderstanding majority.

This division must, therefore, give way to a reconciliation, to a re-uniting.

The reconciliation and re-uniting must be “by the rope of God.”

For the rediscovery by key areas in the West of the glorious potentialities of the individual will of necessity lead to a clearer understanding of God, to a closer relationship with God, to a closer dependence upon God.

As the West turns from reliance upon materialistic, tax-dodging, prestige-seeking boards and committees to the creative spirit, it will indeed be coming closer to the Creator, by whom all the creative spirits of men are kindled and inspired.

A great difficulty, here in key areas of the West, has been and still is, that the materialistically entrenched boards and committees do not permit the still, small voice of individual creativeness to be heard. There is an obstinate refusal to consider the very nature of our malady.

It is urged, therefore, that all true friends of Western civilization, all those who wish for the survival of Western civilization, should give serious attention to the essential nature of this crucial problem and should diligently search for possible solutions. ♦

Perspectives: The Science of Knowledge



It was in 1969 that man marched on the moon. Now we are trying to find ways to land on Mars. Science has really come a long way. Knowledge is on the rise. In the process, however, we have discovered that the more knowledge we gain, we realize a lack thereof. Sorry for the “thereof.” I was trying to impress you with my knowledge of legal terms.

We have still not figured out how old planet earth is. James Michener, in his book *Centennial*, discussed it. He put together a chart showing what the estimate of the life of earth was calculated to be at different times in history. I will not reproduce the whole chart. To give you an idea, in 1642, it was estimated that the earth started on September 17, 3928 BC. This was the

The guilty are eventually going to be punished by the Almighty. If OJ Simpson did it, God will definitely deal with him in the next world. So have faith and try to reform people instead of finding ways to punish them in this world. The problem with knowledge and truth doesn't arise in relation to God because He is the All-Knowing. Meanwhile, we have to deal with our shortcomings of knowledge in this world.

estimate by John Lightfoot, professor of Greek. In 1869, Thomas Huxley's estimate was 100,000,000 years. In 1917, Joseph Bernell figured it to be 1,600,000 years. Tilton and Steigler, in 1960, calculated it to be between 4,750,000,000 years plus and minus 50,000,000 years. Tilton and Steigler did their analytic work on the Canadian Shields using lead isotopes.

As Mr. Michener suggested in his book, we should not try to guess the earth's age until more studies are in. Pretty soon the age of the earth could be estimated at six billion years or longer as we move in the future. The fact is that the more knowledge we acquire, we

find out that there is more to figure out.

In our quest to probe the earth, with all our knowledge and resources, we haven't gone very far. I think the diameter of the earth is about 12,500 miles. The deepest hole we've been able to dig is in the thousands of feet. So we've only scratched the surface. Let me put it in a way that we can relate to the size proportions. Let us say that the earth is an apple. With a needle, you probe into the apple. So far we have not gone beyond its peel. We are searching around in the skin and who knows if we will ever get to the good part.

This same proportion holds true when

you compare going to Mars with the size of the universe according to how we have estimated its size at this time.

The earth is a mass. When you probe it, it lets you experiment with it. You can drill it, blow it up, carve it, treat it or mistreat it in any way you want. It allows you to explore it, feel it, test it and it does not resist. In spite of this fact, our knowledge is limited. We can be standing in a pond and wouldn't know if five feet away from us is a snake, a turtle or a jellyfish waiting for us to step on it.

So far I have talked about the physical world. When it comes to the knowledge about human beings, it is a different story altogether.

Humans resist, deceive, dodge and are good at acting. They even attend acting schools so they can be good at it.

Wives have a problem getting answers to simple questions. Such as: Do I look fat? Which dress do you think looks better on me? Husbands have devised facial expressions to mingle with their words. Trying to get information from the spouse in divorce court takes on a whole new dimension. When we want to probe human beings, our job is tough and in some cases impossible.

We consider someone guilty and put him in jail. In some cases we even put them on the death row. Then we find out that the person was innocent. It is not always the accused that is acting. Sometimes, it is the police and even the judge. The State of Illinois cancelled all death penalties because the situation became so apparent. So how do we find the truth from human beings?

A lot of times troubles in our society stem from envy, suspicion and greed. We have been told in the Holy Qur'an and *Ahadith* not to get involved in suspicion of others' and faultfinding. We fool ourselves into thinking we are righteous by pointing out others'

shortcomings. The Holy Qur'an even says that some suspicion becomes a sin. Here, some translate the word "sin" as something that does much harm.

Ibn Masood has related that "we have been forbidden (by the Holy Prophet) to search for faults. We can take note of that which is obvious and overt." The same way we have been commanded not to spy on others.

There is also a principle established by Islam, which is unique. If a person accuses another of a wrongful act and it is proved to be false, the accuser receives the punishment corresponding to that act. If a person accuses another of adultery and it proves to be false, the accuser gets the punishment prescribed for adultery. The proof of the accusation has to be in accordance with the strict laws in reference to witnesses.

Once it is established that a witness has lied, his or her testimony is never accepted in the court in the future for anything. The policemen in those murder cases would have been careful if they knew they could be charged for false accusations.

While I'm at it, let me give you my take on the Clinton-Monica fiasco. First of all, there is no justification for spending *millions of dollars* on spying in gathering evidence against any person for adultery.

In the New Testament, there is only one case in which a woman was tried for adultery. She was going to be stoned. One thing to note is that the man was not charged. Obviously, if she committed adultery there had to be a man involved. She didn't do it by herself. We have other names for that kind of activity. Jesus^{as} asked the crowd why they were going to stone her. This is the story where Jesus^{as} said: "Let the man who hath not sinned cast the first stone." What Jesus^{as} actually inferred was that you are a nation of adulterers, so how can you take

one woman and stone her? If she needs to be stoned for adultery then all of you line up with her.

In western society, where it is just about required, if not a tradition, to date and have sex before getting married, everyone is a fornicator. I'm not just talking about the couples that decide to live together before getting married. So how can you point fingers at one person for sexual misbehavior?

It is much more important to keep the innocent protected. It's not that essential to punish the guilty. You will find in the Islamic law, very stringent standards for proving an accusation. You need four eyewitnesses to prove fornication or adultery. If you accuse but cannot produce the witnesses, you can be liable for the punishment that the accused would have received.

The guilty are eventually going to be punished by the Almighty. If OJ Simpson did it, God will definitely deal with him in the next world. So have faith and try to reform people instead of finding ways to punish them in this world. The problem with knowledge and truth doesn't arise in relation to God because He is the All-Knowing. Meanwhile, we have to deal with our shortcomings of knowledge in this world.

So let's do the best we can. Allah says that if you forgive – in order to reform – a person, your reward is with Him. Let us not try to act as if we have mastered knowledge and truth.

I'm not sure what the age of this planet is. I know that it is about fifteen minutes more than when you started reading this column. Frankly, I am not sure about that either.

You could have read it slower or faster just to throw my estimate out the window.

Falahud Din Shams

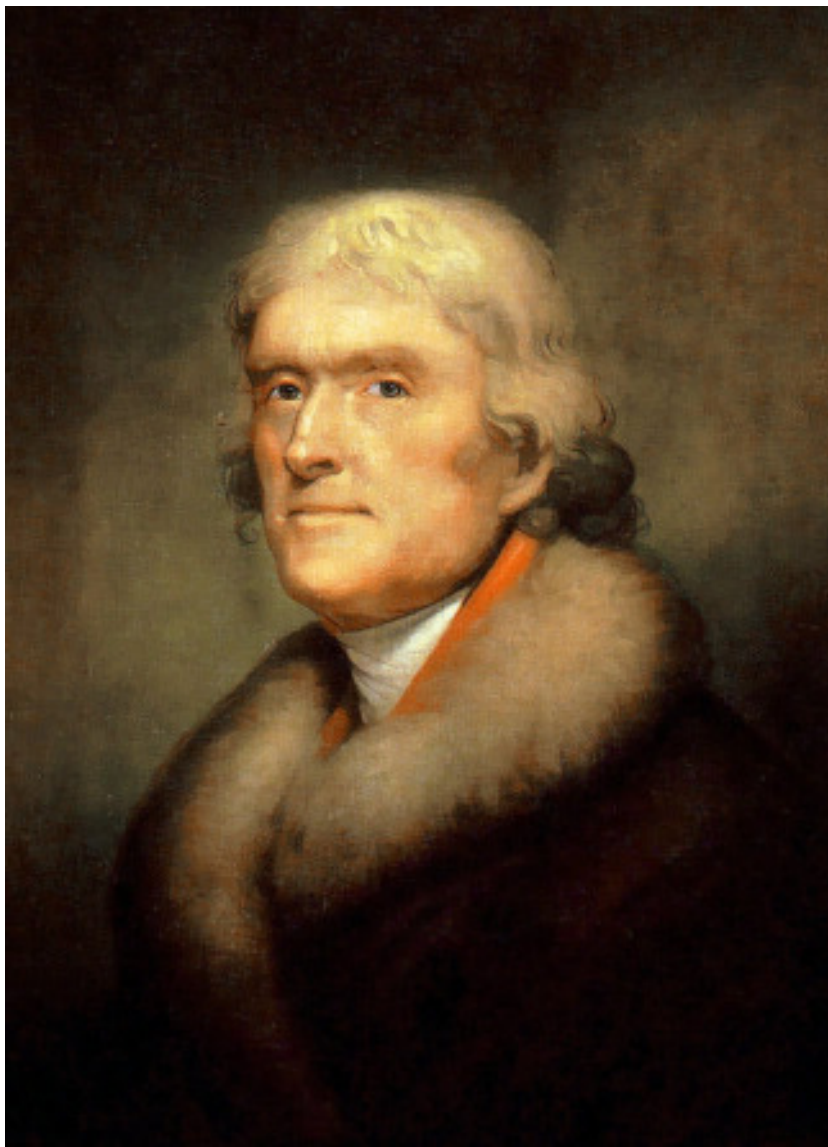
President Thomas Jefferson: Was He a Monotheist?

By Dr. Zia H. Shah

“In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. Say ‘He is Allah, the One! Allah the Independent and Besought of all. He begets not, nor, is He begotten, and there is non like unto Him.’” (112:1-5)

United States Congressman Mr. Keith Ellison, a Democrat from Minnesota, places his hand on an English translation of the Qur’an published in the 1750s and once owned by President Thomas Jefferson, as he is sworn into office on Capital Hill.

Keith Ellison made history in January 2007 by becoming the first Muslim member of Congress and embellished the occasion by taking a ceremonial oath on the Holy Qur’an. Ellison is an African-American who converted to Islam during his college years. In a very strategic move he succeeded in taking his oath of office, using Thomas Jefferson’s own copy of the Holy Qur’an. The Qur’an was acquired in 1815 as part of a collection of over 6,400 volumes that Jefferson sold for \$24,000 to replace the congressional library that had been burned by British troops the year before, in the War of 1812. The book’s leather binding was added in 1919. Inside, it reads, “The Koran,



commonly called ‘The Alcoran of Mohammed.’” Jefferson marked his ownership by writing the letter “J” next to the letter “T” that was already at the bottom of page.

Ellison said that he chose this copy of the Holy Qur’an because it showed that a visionary like Jefferson believed that wisdom could be gleaned from many sources. Edwin Gaustad has written a

religious biography of Thomas Jefferson titled *Sworn on the Altar of God*. He writes, “Jefferson would gather ideas as a reaper gathered corn, selecting and retaining the most delectable, ignoring or discarding what he regarded as unsuitable to his taste.”¹ In other words he sought ideas from all sorts of philosophers from all different times. Jefferson seemed to have a special ability to decipher right from wrong and useful from useless. He showed that in so many different spheres of life. Jefferson liked books as those gave him new and good ideas. He was a great collector of books. When Thomas Jefferson went abroad as an emissary to France in 1785, the opportunities for book buying m a r v e l o u s l y multi-p lied. Edwin Gaustad writes,

“Besides haunting the bookstalls in Paris, ‘I had standing orders,’ Jefferson wrote, ‘during the whole time I was in Europe on its principal book-marts, particularly Amsterdam, Frankfort, Madrid, and London.’ Jefferson was a remarkable collector but an even more remarkable and voracious reader of these thousands of volumes.”²

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence (1776) of the United States and its third president (1801-09). An early advocate of total separation of church and state, he was the most eloquent proponent of individual freedom as the core meaning of the American Revolution. Jefferson achieved distinction as an horticulturist, architect, paleontologist, author and inventor. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy welcomed forty-nine Nobel Prize winners to the White House, by saying, "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent and of human knowledge that has ever been gathered together at the White House — with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."³ Who was this genius Jefferson? What were his religious beliefs? What ideas did he borrow from the Holy Qur'an? Were his ideas closer to the Holy Qur'an or to the Holy Bible?

It was generally not customary in 18th century Europe or America to give credit to the Muslims or to the Holy Qur'an. The result of this phenomenon is that we cannot examine the question as to what Jefferson borrowed from the Holy Qur'an in any reasonable fashion, as there is no written record of that. On the contrary it is much easier to examine as to whether his ideas were closer to the Holy Qur'an or to the Holy Bible? By answering the latter question we can make some judgment about the other inquiries.

After extensive study of different books of the Bible, Jefferson concluded, "Christianity had traditionally rested not upon reason or experience but upon mystery and miracle. The Bible, moreover, portrayed a deity quite different from that revealed in nature, a deity that reason could neither explain nor defend. How rational could it possibly be for the God of the whole universe to reveal himself solely to one small nation in the eastern Mediterranean and to leave the rest of the world in utter ignorance of his existence? It seemed even more irrational to believe that the Supreme Being of the cosmos had "sent his only begotten son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger."⁴

But he was not an atheist by any means.

Jefferson, like many of those authors whom he had read in his youth, had no trouble accepting the argument for God's existence from the magnificent design evident in Allah's creation. His thoughts were perfectly in keeping with the verses of the Holy Qur'an quoted above and the verses of Sura Hashr:

"He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth

consummate skill, and indefinite power in every atom of its composition.' This was the case whether one contemplated the heavens above ('the movement of the heavenly bodies, so exactly held in their course by the balance of centrifugal and centripetal forces') or the earth below ('the structure of our earth itself, with its distribution of lands, waters, and atmosphere, animal and vegetable bodies insects as mere atoms of life, yet as perfectly organized as man or mammoth')."⁵

One Creator of the Universe

Jefferson was not only a genius, but a free and an independent thinker. It was easy for him to see that our Universe speaks of one Creator, call him Allah or by whatever name, but there cannot be three creators of this world.⁶ There are no creations of the Holy Ghost or of Jesus Christ^{as} that we can see.^{7 8 9} We Muslims love Jesus Christ^{as} dearly and applaud him as a prophet. But he did not create anything to merit a status equal to Allah All-Mighty.^{10 11 12} The Holy Qur'an says: Is He, then, Who creates like one who creates not? Will you not then take heed?¹³ There is one theme in the creation of this universe be it living or non-living. In the living beings there is similar RNA and one kind of DNA. The theory of evolution ties all living beings to one ancestry or lineage.

The physicists are working on a string theory that will unite all forms of matter and energy into one. If there had been in the heavens and the earth other gods besides Allah, then there would have been chaos in the Universe.¹⁴ This is the fundamental nature of multiple egos and entities, with contradicting visions, struggling with each other.¹⁵ Being an avid student of nature Jefferson drifted from Trinity and leaned towards monotheism.

Moving to the subject of creation to the maintenance of the Universe, Sir Isaac Newton saw that there is no changing of the laws of nature and that the Universe follows the rules of mathematics. In other words he understood the true meaning of the verse of Sura Rum:

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***After extensive
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traditionally rested
not upon reason or
experience but upon
mystery and miracle.***

glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise" (59:25).

"'It was impossible,' Jefferson wrote to John Adams, 'for the human mind not to perceive and feel a conviction of design,

“So set thy face to the service of religion with single-minded devotion. And follow the nature made by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah. That is the right religion - but most men know not” (30:31).

Pertaining to Jefferson, Edwin Gaustad writes, “Newton taught Jefferson that God’s world was orderly, dependable, regular and predictable. From his *Principia* (1687), the whole Western world learned that patient observation and careful mathematical calculation could reveal previously unknown truths about the nature of the universe. Planets did not ‘wander,’ but moved according to specific laws; like all matter in motion, they proceeded not by chance but by design. England’s ‘greatest and rarest genius’ (in David Hume’s words) placed science firmly in the center of the modern world; indeed, Newton helped create the modern world.”¹⁶

For Jefferson the laws of Nature were God’s laws. They did not have an independent status of their own. They came into being by God’s decree, and they continued to operate, as Newton demonstrated, through God’s unceasing providential direction. Unlike many other deists, Jefferson did not hold that God created the world and then retired from the scene; rather, he believed that God continued to create and sustain the world moment by moment. Gravity was not a property of matter: it was God’s law for the orderly operation of matter, one of the means by which he brought order out of chaos.¹⁷ To a close observer of Nature, which Jefferson surely was, the conclusion could not be denied, “We see evident proofs of the necessity of a super-intending power to maintain the universe in its course and order.”¹⁸

Here again his thoughts were perfectly in keeping with the throne verse of the Holy Quran, “Allah - there is no god save Him, the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth; and the care of them wearies Him not; and He is the High, the Great.”¹⁹

Jefferson’s views were far more in line with the sublime teachings of the Holy Qur’an than any rudimentary mention of these subjects in the Holy Bible. Yet the

Holy Qur’an historically received no credit for these views. Why? Why! I believe the answer is obvious. The political and the religious atmosphere of the West was not conducive to giving any credit to the Holy Qur’an. It does not allow that even today! In his autobiography talking about the year 1769 Thomas Jefferson writes, “Our minds were circumscribed within narrow limits by an habitual belief that it was our duty to be subordinate to the mother country in all matters of government, to direct all our labors in subservience to her interests, and even to observe a bigoted intolerance for all religions but hers.”²⁰

Corruptions of Christianity

Joseph Priestly was a chemist renowned for discovering oxygen and carbon dioxide. But he was as notorious in Europe as he was famous. He received his notoriety from writing a book, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* originally published in 1782. Priestley was besieged by mobs in Birmingham, England, and having lost both his home and his laboratory to their fury, had retreated in 1791 to London. Even there his radicalism in religion and his embrace of France magnified his unpopularity and aggravated the danger he faced. So in 1794, at the urging of Jefferson and others, he migrated to America, settling in Pennsylvania for the last decade of his turbulent life. In 1797 in Philadelphia, Priestley delivered a series of lectures on Christianity. It was here that Jefferson met him and learned from his lectures. Priestley argued, for example, that the real “mystery” of the Trinity was that so many Christians believed it. For Jesus did not teach it, the Bible did not proclaim it, and Reason could not honor it. Jesus lived as a human being, claimed to be nothing more than the “son of man,” whose mission was to show all humankind how they should live and what God expected of them. The Old Testament honored monotheism, as did the New Testament, rightly read.²¹ Jefferson embraced Priestley’s views wholeheartedly. The description of President Thomas Jefferson in Wikipedia.com is very revealing:

“Miracles and references to the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus are notably absent from the Jefferson Bible. The Bible begins with an account of Jesus’ birth without references to angels, genealogy, or

prophecy. The work ends with the words: “Now, in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus. And rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.” There is no mention of the resurrection.”

In August of 1804, Jefferson wrote to his friend Benjamin Rush, “I shall some of these days ask you to read the ‘little volume’ on Jesus.” Rush, who had responded positively to an earlier writing by Thomas Jefferson named ‘the Syllabus’ sent the year before, now gave a disconcerting reply. Rush was not ready to give up his ideas about the divinity of Jesus^{as}. So he wrote back, unless Jefferson’s ‘little volume’ advanced the divinity of Jesus^{as} ‘and renders his death as well as his life necessary for the restoration of mankind, I shall not concur with its author.’ Jefferson, who had abandoned all notions of atonement and divinity, therefore declined to send his modest editing effort to his good friend.²²

Jefferson formulated a bible for his own use. He carefully went through the New Testament and took out those verses from the Gospels that in his view best conveyed the ‘pure and unsophisticated doctrines’ of Jesus^{as}. Having undertaken the task of separating the authentic and original Jesus^{as} from the later Platonized and mythical Jesus^{as}, Jefferson told John Adams that he found the true sayings of Jesus Christ^{as} ‘as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.’ His letter stated, “We must reduce our volume to the simple evangelists, select, even from them, the very words only of Jesus, paring off the amphibologisms into which they have been led, by forgetting often, or not understanding, what had fallen from him, by giving their own misconceptions as his dicta, and expressing unintelligibly for others what they had not understood themselves. There will be found remaining the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man. I have performed this operation for my own use, by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book, and arranging the matter which is evidently his, and which is as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill.”²³

Jefferson worked without knowledge of manuscript transmission or oral traditions

or any of the biblical apparatus that later centuries would introduce. Rather, taking Reason and Nature as his trusted guides, he determined by sense and sound what had fallen from the lips of Jesus^{as} himself. And the result was pure gold, gold separated from the dross, as he told William Short much later. In examining the Gospels carefully, Jefferson found ‘many passages of fine imagination, correct morality, and of the loveliest benevolence.’ Jefferson noted that all that beauty sat trapped in ‘so much ignorance, so much absurdity, so much untruth, charlatanism, and imposture.’ Something had to be done to extract the gold. He also pointed out, ‘I found the work obvious and easy’.²⁴

Divinity of Jesus

In the Gospel according to John, where Jesus makes the most unambiguous claims to divinity (“the Father is in me, and I in him”; “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me”; “I am in the Father, and the Father in me”; etc.), Jefferson repeatedly turned away from all such claims. One of the most striking examples of this occurs in chapter 13, where Jefferson included the verses (21-26) relating to the Last Supper. Then verse 31 begins, “Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said. . .” What Jesus said at that point was, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” But Jefferson dropped that and the two following verses to jump abruptly to the moral message, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (v. 34). When quoting from John, Jefferson kept his blade busy. Finally, in passages treating the last days of Jesus, Jefferson stayed with the mortal man who died on the cross and was buried. After the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, “Joseph of Arimathea . . . besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave” (John 19:38). After preparing the body for burial, disciples transported it to a new tomb in the crucifixion garden. At that point, taking fragments from John and from Matthew, Jefferson’s scriptures concluded, “There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.” No resurrection, no appearances of a risen Lord, no ascension into heaven. A great teacher, the greatest of all moral

teachers, had died and was buried.²⁵

Jefferson, after his presidency years, expressed general agreement with his friend Joseph Priestley’s Unitarianism, which rejects the doctrine of Trinity. In a letter to an Ohio pioneer he wrote, “I rejoice that in this blessed country of free inquiry and belief, which has surrendered its conscience to neither kings or priests, the genuine doctrine of only one God is reviving, and I trust that there is not a young man now living in the United States who will not die a Unitarian.”²⁶ His dream, however, of large scale conversion to the belief in One God was not to come true in the time of his contemporaries. It would have to wait until the advent of Islam in the West.

Belief in God

Jefferson wrote at length on religion and most scholars agree with the claim that Jefferson was a deist, a common position held by intellectuals in the late 18th century.²⁷ He believed in one God and was a Unitarian. Historically, Unitarianism believed in the unity of God and not the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Unitarians believed in the moral authority, but not the deity, of Jesus^{as}. Throughout the world, many Unitarian congregations and associations belong to the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists.

If the Holy Qur’an has a fundamental claim to any idea then it is monotheism. It is said that one third of the Holy Qur’an is dedicated to this fundamental Islamic doctrine. Although the Torah also claims monotheism, the Holy Qur’an offers it to a universal audience and is preserved in its pristine purity and unparalleled beauty.

It is difficult to know whether Thomas Jefferson borrowed the idea from the Holy Qur’an, but the fact remains that the Holy Qur’an has been the best and the most articulate advocate of monotheism. It deserves acknowledgement whenever a good case is made for monotheism in more recent history. Given the atmosphere of Jefferson’s time, it was highly unlikely for him to give credit to the Holy Qur’an. However, he was certainly a strong proponent of one God and denied Trinity in very unambiguous terms. He clearly asserted his belief in the first half of the creed of Islam, “There is no God but Allah.”

Conclusion

Jefferson was an individual who lives on in the ideas and institutions he fathered. It is important to study him from different angles, especially his ideas on the separation of church and state. The world is desperately in need of his ideas on religious tolerance and the dangers of political bigotry. It is hoped that Muslim writers with backgrounds in politics, law and history will champion this rich field.

Monotheism is a fundamental reality for humankind. That is why it is repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Qur’an. Allah lays paramount importance on this teaching in His Final Scripture. The Holy Qur’an says:

“And he, who calls on another god along with Allah, for which he has no proof, shall have to render an account to his Lord. Certainly the disbelievers do not prosper.” (23:118) ♦

(Endnotes)

- ¹ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 25.
- ² Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 19-20.
- ³ April 29, 1962 dinner honoring 49 Nobel Laureates (Simpson’s Contemporary Quotations, 1988, from Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy, 1962, p. 347).
- ⁴ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 22-23.
- ⁵ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 36.
- ⁶ The Holy Qur’an. Al-Mu’minun 23:118.
- ⁷ The Holy Qur’an. Al Ahqaf 46:5.
- ⁸ The Holy Qur’an. Al A’arf 7:192.
- ⁹ The Holy Qur’an. Al Luqman 31:12.
- ¹⁰ The Holy Qur’an. Al Nahl 16:21.
- ¹¹ The Holy Qur’an. Al Furqan 25:3-4.
- ¹² The Holy Qur’an. Al Hajj 22:74.
- ¹³ The Holy Qur’an. Al Nahl 16:18.
- ¹⁴ The Holy Qur’an. Al Anbiyya 21:23.
- ¹⁵ The Holy Qur’an. Al-Mu’minun 23:92-93.
- ¹⁶ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 21.
- ¹⁷ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 36.
- ¹⁸ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 36.
- ¹⁹ The Holy Qur’an. Al Baqarah 2:256.
- ²⁰ Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson Writings. The Library of America, eighteenth printing. ISBN 0-940450-16-x. Page 5.
- ²¹ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 112.
- ²² Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 120.
- ²³ http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/jefferson_m_03.html
- ²⁴ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 119.
- ²⁵ Edwin Gaustad. Sworn on the altar of God: A religious biography of Thomas Jefferson. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996, p 130-131.
- ²⁶ Letter to Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse June 26, 1822
- ²⁷ Avery Cardinal Dulles, “The Deist Minimum” First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life Issue: 149. (Jan 2005) pp 25+ <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0501/articles/dulles.htm>



How many Muslims are there in the world? In America?

In 2007, reliable worldwide estimates exceeded 1.3 billion on the low end (CIA World Fact book) and exceeded 1.8 billion on the high end (Islamic Population.com). Countries with the highest Muslim populations are Indonesia (195 million), Pakistan (160 million), India (155 million) and Bangladesh (130 million). In the U.S., estimates range from 2.35 million (Pew Research Center Report, May 2007) to 7 million (Hartford Institute for Religious Research). The wide-ranging estimate is due to the fact that America's census does not track religion. Where there *is* consensus is that more Americans are accepting Islam than any other religion. The same can be safely said worldwide.

Is it true the prophet Muhammad^{sa} married a Jewish woman?

You refer to Safiyah^{ra}, born to Haiy bin Akhtab, a chieftain of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir in Medina. She was indeed Jewish early in her life. After the Battle of Khyber, where both her husband and father died, she and others were captured. On account of her status, Prophet Muhammad^{sa} immediately released her. The Muslims invited her to accept Islam, which she did. Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, knowing she had lost both her husband and father in battle, offered his hand in marriage, which she promptly accepted. The two were married in 628 AD.

Being of Jewish origin, and an outsider, Safiyah^{ra} often received discriminatory treatment from the Holy Prophet's other wives. On one occasion, A'isha^{ra} and Zaynab^{ra} teased Safiyah^{ra} that not only were they married to the Prophet, but they were also related to him and of the same ethnicity.

When Safiyah^{ra} complained to the Prophet, he replied: "Safiyah, why didn't your reply saying that your father was Aaron, your uncle Moses and your husband Muhammad; so how can they be superior to you?" Safiyah^{ra} died in 671 and is buried in *Jannatul Baqi* a blessed graveyard in Medina.

Can you explain the Sunni and Shia sects in Islam and where the Ahmadiyya fit?

Sunni and Shia are not "sects" so much as the two broad "categories" within which sects of Islam are sorted. In 1889, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community became the 73rd recognized "sect" of Islam. Eighty-five percent of the prior 72 sects (and worldwide Muslim population) can be categorized as Sunni (including Ahmadiyya) and the remaining as Shia.

At numerous times during the course of Islamic history, political events and ideological and theological issues divided the Muslim community into various groups which then started to identify with specific causes.

The development of Shia sects began with the election of the third Khalifa, Uthman^{ra}. A small council was established to elect the third khalifa and those who supported Ali were visibly disappointed that Khilafat had been withheld from Prophet Muhammad's^{sa} own family (as Ali^{ra} was his cousin). Ali^{ra} soon became the fourth and final "Righteous Khalifa" anyways. After his death, his son Hasan^{ra} was elected to the office, ultimately abdicating to secure peace in the Islamic kingdom (Muawiah, a competing candidate attacked Hasan's armies upon learning of his election). Those who supported Ali^{ra}, then Hasan^{ra} and generally the family bloodline of the Prophet, known as the Shi'a, never accepted Muawiah's Khilafat and followed their own imams who were descendants of Ali^{ra}.

Broadly, Sunni sects accept the authority and the bona fide status of the first four *Khulafa-e-Rashideen* or Righteous Successors of the Holy Prophet (Abu Bakr^{ra}, Umar^{ra}, Uthman^{ra} and Ali^{ra}) and the comprehensive system of Islamic law, the *Sharia*. There are four distinct orthodox schools of law recognized by the Sunni:

Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi and Hanbali. Ahmadiyya generally follow the Hanafi school of law. While the Qur'an admonished Muslims to shun sectarianism, Muslims nonetheless broke into sects. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} prophesied this would happen and in the latter days, there would be 72 sects and one true *Jama'at* or Community. The Ahmadiyya claims to represent the true Muslim community of the latter days as prophesied by the Prophet of Islam.

What did the Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community do prior to his election?

Mirza Masroor Ahmad earned his Masters of Science degree in Agricultural Economics in 1976. The following year he dedicated his life to serving humanity through the Community and moved to Ghana, where he became the founding principal of the Ahmadiyya Secondary School Salaga, a school in the northern region of Ghana, where he served for two years. Mr. Ahmad was then appointed as the manager of the Ahmadiyya Agricultural Farm in Depali, in the northern region of Ghana, a position he held for two years, conducting groundbreaking studies in growing wheat.

In 1985, Mr. Ahmad returned to Pakistan and for the next twelve years held various offices in the Community's headquarters. In 1997, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV, appointed Mirza Masroor Ahmad as *Nazir A'la* or Chief Executive Officer of *Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya* or Central Executive Committee – Pakistan. He held this post until his election in 2003.

Is there a way to obtain the Muslim Sunrise issue devoted to concept of God, or other back issues?

Yes, you can email muslimsunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or mail your request with a \$4 check to our address. Also, we are currently developing a website that will contain content from current and past issues, and a host of other features. Readers will be able to interact on discussion boards, send letters to the editor, ask questions and much more. Stay tuned to www.muslimsunrise.com.

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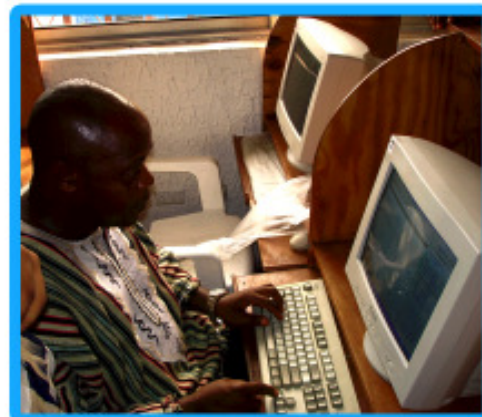
Ghana



Humanity First USA partnered with the Neuro-Spinal Research Development Organization and performed the most recent surgical mission in Ghana during 2006. This effort had been started in 2000 by a private practice neurosurgeon in Baltimore, who is affiliated with the Johns Hopkins Hospital and other Baltimore area hospitals. He has been very successful in organizing a group of physicians and nurses who have been going to Ghana to perform surgical procedures free of charge for the past six years. An average of approximately 15 team members go each year and this past year, two surgical teams were deployed for the first time. In coordination with hospital administrations, Humanity First teams gather unused supplies that would be wasted within our system, sort, and then ship supplies to Ghana in a container in advance of the annual effort (the 2007 container for this year's upcoming trip left during the last week of March 2007). This past year the team performed neurosurgical and general surgical procedures out of the main university hospital in Accra but also did more than 30 simple and complex procedures on children and adults in sparsely-outfitted hospitals in remote areas.

Liberia & Guyana

Earlier this year Humanity First Institutes of Computer Studies were opened in Monrovia, Liberia and Guyana. Humanity First USA provided the computer schools with computers, printers, software, and other technical supplies. The objective of these Computer Institutes is to empower the citizens of Liberia and Guyana with the necessary IT training to obtain employment to support themselves, their families and help rebuild the economy. Collectively, over a 100 male and female students have enrolled in these schools. The Liberian Computer Institute was inaugurated by the Minister of Profession and Technical Education and in his speech he admired the efforts of Humanity First and promised to help Humanity First is every way possible.



Indonesia



Humanity First USA continues to carry out rebuilding efforts following the 2005 tsunami in Indonesia (Phase II). In different parts of Banda Aceh, Humanity First USA has installed over 15 water wells along with piping and motors. These wells have provided cleaning drinking water to over 5,000 people displaced by the tsunami. Humanity First also helped in rebuilding two schools in addition to providing classroom furniture, books, computers, school bags and many other school supplies. Humanity First also promoted self-sustenance by providing three villages with Begans, fishermen's netting. This netting will enable fishermen to catch fish and shrimp potentially becoming a source of livelihood for the entire village. A proposal for Phase III - Human Development and Disaster Recovery for tsunami victims is currently under review and a grant for \$100,000 has been approved.



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